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THE
LAST
TRAITOR OF
LONG ISLAND

RICHARD HENRY SAVAGE

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THE
LAST TRAITOR OF LONG ISLAND

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The Last Traitor of Long Island

A STORY OF THE SEA

BY

COL. RICHARD HENRY SAVAGE

AUTHOR OF

"MY OFFICIAL WIFE," "AN EXILE FROM LONDON,"
' COMMANDER LEIGH,' "FOR A YOUNG QUEEN'S BRIGHT EYES,"
ETC., ETC.

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**THE
LAST TRAITOR OF LONG ISLAND**

The Last Traitor of Long Island

BOOK I.

FROM DUPE TO PIRATE

CHAPTER I.

THE THREE YEARS' CRUISE OF THE "REINDEER."

"Pull in, Betsy, hand over hand!" cried the weather-beaten Captain Jonas Starbuck, as the sea-battered old whaler *Reindeer* emerged from the "Race" of Eastern Long Island, and stood down the Sound, with every stitch of sail set.

It was the balmy second of April, eighteen hundred and sixty-four, and the veteran Captain then went below and "spliced the main brace" with a huge internal satisfaction.

To have neatly made the Montauk landfall, after the middle passage,—only touching at the Azores, after leaving the Cape of Good Hope,—was a most notable feat of seamanship.

Picking up Long Island,—within twenty miles of Montauk Light,—the old salt had dodged Shelter,—Gardiner's, Fisher's, and Plum Islands, and so, gladly turned the ship over to the First Officer, and the regular watch.

Already, the semaphore on Block Island had taken down Starbuck's private signals, and, in two hours,—the telegraph from Point Judith, had brought joy to the hearts of the anxious associates of the Cold Spring Whaling Company.

Since the incorporation of the whaling company, in eighteen hundred and thirty-six,—no single vessel's return had been awaited like the homecoming of this staunch full-rigged ship *Reindeer*,—the flag ship of the fleet of hardy whalers.

As the shores of Suffolk County seemed to glide by,—Jonas Starbuck grinned over his second 'brandy toddy,' for, he had well filled his private lockers at the Japanese trading station on the Kurile Islands.

The sly old sea dog knew well the jovial excitement which would be caused by his roughly worded message. "Full up,—chock-a-block,—oil,—trade,—bone, and, ivory."

He rubbed his hands softly, as he sought the quarter deck, for a friendly squint at Oyster Pond Point, Greenport and East Marion.

The men were lounging about in easy contentment, spread out over the decks now littered with all the impediments of a returning whaler.

"Looks mighty harnsome, Hiram,—after three and a half years in blue water!" said the skipper, addressing his stalwart watch officer.

Third mate Hiram Worth nodded.

"Crack on every stitch that the old tub will carry, my boy!" genially said Starbuck, "I'm as anxious to see Betsy Starbuck and the children as you are to get your arms again around that there slim-waisted Roletta Armstrong."

"You've made your lucky trip this time, my boy! Going out as second harpooner and head hunter, you come back third mate—and, your share of the catch will pay off your mother's mortgage and besides,—fix Roletta out for the wedding!"

Seeing all ship shape and sailor fashion, the light-hearted Starbuck dragged young Hiram Worth down to drink to "Sweethearts and wives!" though it was no "Saturday night," but, a bright Monday morning.

"Hiram!" huskily whispered the sly old Captain, "I want you to keep the men all satisfied! I'm going to anchor her outside Cold Spring Harbor light house, and let not a single man reach the shore, till the whole

crew are paid off on the capstan head! All, except the officers!"

"Why?" sharply cried the handsome young giant.

Starbuck pointed to the bundle of papers and magazines which he had picked up from the Montauk pilot who had uselessly boarded them.

"Bone's three dollars a pound, sperm oil three dollars a gallon, furs and ivory way out of sight,—and, gold is nearly at three hundred!" growled the old salt.—

"There's a fortune on this ship for us all, when we commute the men's shares, d'ye see?"

"Three hundred thousand dollars in oil, bone, and trade under these decks,—and your twentieth 'lay' gives you a clean fifteen thousand dollars!"

"My own tenth is a sound thirty!"

"Now, don't you forget that you are to stand in for 'ship and owners'!—You are an officer, now! Remember that!"

Strangely agitated,—the six-footer hastened back to his quarter deck, and then—his glowing dark eyes pierced the blue haze, far beyond the gliding steamers and the fitting white sails of the Sound.

"It all seems like a dream!" the third mate murmured, as he thought of the eventful long cruise now ending.

Already the ground tackle was loosened, and the Captain's gig cleared away for lowering.

The old checkerboard ship carried eight lithe whale-boats at her davits,—the main deck was cluttered up with long boat, try furnaces, spare spars, loose rigging, and the pig pens and chicken coops, which had been all crammed at the Azores, with living dainties, for the cabin mess, for, Jonas Starbuck was a notable feeder.

It was a motley crew, as, nine men had lost the "number of their mess," since the *Reindeer* stood out into blue water, six months before the firing on Fort Sumter.

Two Lascars, a Malay, two Kanakas, a Russian half-breed, and three South Sea "moss backs" of doubtful antecedents, had replaced the men swept overboard,

—killed by whales,—and, one who fell under the knife of a deserting comrade, at the Kurile Islands.

The death of the First Officer, Eben Henderson, by an exploding bomb gun—had carried Hiram Worth, from the fok'sal up to the cabin—as “Third Mate,” his education at the Huntington Academy, fitting him to pick up the navigation, in which, after two seasons, he was, now, an adept.

Every inch a sailor at twenty-eight, darkly handsome, and of an athletic and symmetric mould,—Hiram Worth's face grew grave as he saw a United States war vessel stealing along the Sound with her grim Dahlgrens peeping out of the portholes.

There was the flash of the bayonet of the marine sentinel, a gleam of gold on the quarter deck,—and young Worth sighed as he dipped the colors.

“My true place was at the front,—behind a gun,—on a warship!”—sighed the young sailor, to whom promotion and wealth had come so strangely.

“And yet, I had no fair chance!”

They had learned only in a fragmentary way of the great Civil War struggle, by papers caught up at the South Atlantic islands, at Honolulu, at Hakodate,—and the last obtained from a vessel, spoken off Cape Town, on their return.

The astute Starbuck, only touched at the Azores, on his homeward voyage,—keeping in mid ocean, to avoid the cormorant *Alabama*, whose ravages had been reported even, in the North Pacific waste of waters,—by later whalers, now hiding in the Arctic beyond Behring Straits, with true Yankee slyness.—

“Yes! I have thrown my best chance away!” mused Worth. “I might have been a naval officer, and, a gentleman! My father was a China Liner Captain for thirty years,—and, my mother, a Wardour,—is of as good a family as any in Kings, Queens or Suffolk!”

He forgot all his regrets as he sprang forward to “bout ship,” for, every well-known headland only brought him closer to Cold Spring Harbor,—where, in her old family homestead on Lloyd's Neck, he fancied

that Roletta Armstrong was now waiting for him, with the softly shining eyes of love!

"I do not come back to her, empty handed," mused the young whaler, "and, Aunt Wardour and Uncle Jabez Simpson will, at least, be proud of me!"

The *Reindeer* slid along, "with a bone in her teeth," and lighthouse after lighthouse, was picked up, where Hiram could have found his way blindfolded by the mere local breezes.

When eight bells sounded, and, the watch changed, Second Officer Eke Griffin taking the deck,—Worth had already reconciled his conscience to Captain Starbuck's artful settlement with the men.

"Sharp practice, but, I can't help it!" mused Hiram, —as he sat down to a holiday dinner, garnished with a "plum duff" and several bottles of Teneriffe wine.

The junior knew of old Jonas Starbuck's profitable manipulations of the "slop chest," and he half suspected that the white India crepe shawl of wondrous embroidery,—the vases and carvings now ready, as a sea tribute to Betsy Starbuck,—had all been adroitly merged in the "ship's expenses."

Old Jonas was more than a mere "ship's husband," —he could pinch a five-dollar gold piece "till the eagle squealed" in a vain protest.

And moreover,—Hiram Worth well knew the designs of the keen-eyed owners of the craft,—the old heads of the Cold Spring Whaling Company.

Descended from the sly Connecticut settlers who poured into Oyster Bay and Huntington, and then pushed Governor Stuyvesant's stolid Dutchmen backwards,—these money loving squires,—the descendants of crafty Yankee colonists, were hard-hearted taskmasters, and, men of much guile.

Smugglers, slavers, beach combers, privateers, nay, even pirates of dark record, had found the indentations of the North shore to be a convenient cover for many a deed without a name. And the first families took a hand in many a questionable deal. —

Jonas Starbuck was the "head devil" of these wise Sagamores,—and, but too well,—Worth knew that he

would never tread a quarter deck again,—if he exposed the unjust settlement with the men whose proportion of the catch was to be commuted in the depreciated “greenbacks,” and figured down to a shadow!—

It was after the second bottle, when Starbuck,—alone with Hiram,—growled that he had ciphered the men down to about a thousand dollars each.

“That will lift you to twenty thousand, my boy!” croaked Jonas.

“I’ll leave the ship in your charge, till the owners can come off and clear all out, but the officers.”

Worth’s ready protest was met with the sly old fellow’s Mephistophelean wit!

“See here, Hiram!” said Jabez, “Eke Griffin’s no good as a sailor! He’s got a bad cough, too! I know what I’m going to do! You will go out with me as ‘Second officer,’ and nary another mate but you, now, on the *Reindeer* goes on the new cruise!”

“Is it safe to go to sea now?” murmured Hiram, trying to find out what was going on, under the grizzled thatch of the old man’s gray hair. “Remember, this war is still doubtful!”

“I’ve been all over the last six months’ papers, and, beyond this rampagin’ *Alabama*, I find that the *Sumter*, *Georgia*, *Florida*, *Nashville*, *Tallahassee*, *Rappahannock*, and, in fact, all the Southern cruisers have been either taken, or else, chased in to Wilmington, Mobile or Savannah! There’s one or two rebel iron-clads building now in Europe,—the *Stonewall* in Copenhagen, two French armored ships, and the two Laird rams.”

“None of them will ever come up our way! The Davis Confederacy is going to bust soon, but, it will die hard!”

“Now, we have sneaked back safe enough out of the Arctic,—oil and bone are out of sight in price!”

“With you, as pilot—I can steal back safely around the Cape of Good Hope,—and get up to the whaling grounds we found in the North Pacific, and, with one more such voyage, you can settle down on your porch

and just watch your happy youngsters paddling off to school!"

"I'll make a rich man of you, but, I must be able to trust you, and—you must trust me! Owners only will know! Can I count on you?"

"I'll tell you in a week," slowly said Hiram. "It's the chance of a life time! Meanwhile, I'll do as you wish, till you are all squared off! But, Uncle Jabez, and my people, must come on board!"—insisted Hiram.

"Bless the boy! Anything you want!" cried the delighted old schemer. "You see, Hiram, you will be the only confidant that I'll have! You can direct the boats,—the bomb guns,—the hunting and trading,—and, when 'owners' give me a new First and Third officer,—we will sail 'with sealed orders,'—and just loaf along the Gulf stream, picking up a few Bermuda humpbacked whales,—then, take a run over to Funchal,—for fresh water and a deck load of provisions;—after that, with one stop for water and fresh marketing,—we will be up, again, among the 'bowheads,' and, no one the wiser! You shall share with me in the private trade, and—we will keep it all to ourselves!"

"There's a fortune in it!" slowly said the young sailor.

"I'm bringing home the richest catch and trade that ever filled a whaler!" proudly said Jonas, as he emptied the bottle, "and, they've got to give me my own way, for they all love money, and,—they need me! This will set them all wild with delight! A clean two hundred thousand in gold,—to them—and all expenses paid!"—

Hiram Worth's academic education made him the mental superior of the wary old whaling Captain,—yet, when Jonas had produced his best Manila cheroots,—the young man marvelled at Starbuck's clear presentiment of the fading away of the Confederacy.

"Here's the whole thing in a nutshell!" Jonas said. "The South has lost ground steadily. We have a hundred thousand of their veterans cooped up in our prison stockades,—while they have only forty thousand of ours!"

"We have the Mississippi and all their ports closed

up, save Mobile and Wilmington! These will soon fall!"

"With a million men on our rolls, to their quarter of a million, with Grant opening a Virginia campaign to the death,—and, Sherman hammering away at Atlanta,—they have only Lee,—Joe Johnston,—Forrest,—Dick Taylor, and Kirby Smith, in the field. They are out of stores,—money,—munitions,—medicines, and supplies. They cannot build a single sea-going ship in their ports. The outgo of their cotton is stopped,—foreign recognition is now impossible,—and the iron-hearted Grant will go into Richmond, even, if he corduroys the road with dead bodies."—

"He can afford to throw away a hundred thousand dead,—an' yet,—have men enough to smother Lee!"

"No, the jig's up, and,—we have only the fast *Alabama* to dodge! She is rickety and broken down, however, now, so the vessel I spoke off Capetown told me!"

"If she runs against the *Tuscarora*, the *Vanderbilt*, or the *Kearsarge*, she will not last half an hour! She is only manned by marauders!"

"But, if I can sneak the old *Reindeer* down, past the line, after filling her with fresh provisions and live stock at Funchal,—I will refill our tanks with fresh water, at Ascension Island,—take on green stuff, pigs, fowls and vegetables, and so, easily make Madagascar. There, we fit out again!

"Then—we will make a straight run for Honolulu,—and, stand off for the Ochotsk.

"I'll fool them all, for I will, secretly, have all our first mail sent to Funchal,—then the next to Honolulu,—and after that, all to San Francisco,—to be sent up to Kodiak,—by the Russian trading vessels."—

"And," continued Jonas, "our heavy owners are also interested in the New Bedford fleet!

"I have a plan to handle the whole fleet, by sending home the filled vessels,—and thus keeping the whales hemmed in by a ring of our vessels, between the Aleutian Islands and the Behring Strait.

"With a secret understanding,—we can gather in the enormous school of bowheads that you led us into!"

"Now, Hiram," craftily said Starbuck, as he tossed the emptied bottles out of his cabin window, "you and I, alone, must know the secrets of this cruise!"

"We will refit the ship quickly, steal away, as if bound to the Bahamas, and one more such cruise makes us rich men for life. Can I depend on your secrecy? Not even your mother, Uncle Jabez, or Mrs. Wardour is to know!"

"There is Roletta," moodily said Hiram Worth.

"Nonsense, boy!" energetically cried the old skipper.

"The girl is only eighteen! Three years more will make her a woman worthy of you! You know her ambitions! Put a couple of thousand dollars in the Huntington Bank for her! That will finish her education at the Brooklyn Seminary! I'll help you invest the rest of your money well!"

"When we return from this cruise, you'll have saved fifty thousand dollars, out of the two cruises and the trade, for I'll run in to Nagasaki and ship our private furs and ivory, direct to London! I'll take on three hundred barrels of trading rum at Honolulu for your account and mine! So, you can make Roletta a lady for life!"

Cut off from all reliable news of the great struggle, the young Mate could not but accept Jonas Starbuck's conclusions as to the coming fall of the Rebellion.

Neither he, nor the wiseacres of the time, ever understood the political adroitness, in view of the coming elections, which made Abraham Lincoln, after giving Grant and Sherman, each, an army of vast strength, assign Banks, Sigel and Butler to the command of the Army of the James, the Shenandoah and the sixty-one thousand men in Louisiana and Arkansas.

If these "three assignments" were not "political cats' paws" to catch votes, then, history lies!

But, in the weary hours of the dog watch—Hiram Worth keenly watched the twinkling lights on the wooded shores of Lloyd's Neck, as the sturdy old *Reindeer* forged along past Huntington Harbor.

He could almost see the old colonial farm house, bowered in its trees, where he fondly fancied that Rolletta Armstrong was dreaming of him even now.

The return of the *Reindeer* would be instantly reported to her, by his mother, or those marine encyclopedias, Uncle Jabez Simpson or Aunt Wardour.

The ship was now silent. The decks were all deserted after the last "jamboree," in which the artful Jonas had plentifully supplied his men with good Santa Cruz rum, laid in at the Azores, free of duty.

The accordeon and banjo had furnished music, and brawny forms lay around the deck as they fell in the exhaustion of hornpipe or reel.

The "largest liberty" had been accorded, as, Captain Starbuck proposed to hoodwink his men and keep from them, the enhanced "war prices" of their wonderful catch.

The "trade" had been all carried on, for account of "Starbuck and owners."

"Poor devils," mused Worth, "a thousand dollars each will be enough for the groggeries of Oyster Bay, Cold Spring, and Huntington, to say nothing of the Bowery."

It was long before the time when, by artful custom, the whalers were paid off at Honolulu, a crafty American Consul, there, figuring the commuted "lay" of each man, save the officers, down to figures only furnishing a three weeks' spree in Kanakatown, in return for years of desperate toil and dangerous exposure.

The rank of "second officer," the secret partnership with that "money spinner," Starbuck, was a temptation not to be lightly put away.

His whole life passed in review since the death of his father, a veteran captain, had left him at eighteen, the architect of his own fortunes.

Bold, resolute, a dead shot, and a natural gunner, a child of the sea, who from boyhood had laid his hand on the mane of old Ocean, Hiram Worth had finished his third voyage of three years to the dreaded Arctic.

To him, torn away from the Academy, to face the

perils of "reefing royals" off Cape Horn, the wild waste of waters was the only real home he had ever known.

His heart beat tenderly at the thought of his beloved mother and his sturdy relatives.

Well he knew the pride which his promotion and enhanced fortunes would bring to the home of the woman, who, as a Wardour, had stepped down a grade in marrying Ezra Worth, when he was only the third mate of a Salem liner in the China trade.

"That fifteen-hundred dollar mortgage shall go into the flames to celebrate mother's birthday," he mused.

"And, then——"

His heart leaped up at the possibilities of the future social elevation of Roletta Armstrong.

"Dare I risk it?" he growled, for his face hardened, as he thought of his boyhood rival, the only son and heir of the rich Huntington banker, Zenas Coffin.

No love had ever been lost between Jasper Coffin and Hiram Worth.

Since the days when the richer lad had sneered at the patched jacket of the fatherless boy, a deadly hatred, intensified by the fisticuffs of boyhood and young manhood, divided the rivals.

The "Cold Spring lads," captained by Hiram Worth, had often vanquished the "Huntington contingent."

The traditions of the Suffolk Academy long celebrated the desperate battle which followed Jasper Coffin's sending the bouquet of rare exotics to that star of Suffolk loveliness, Roletta Armstrong, on the graduating day of both.

After an hour and a half of "stand up" fighting, with a wrist bone broken, Jasper Coffin sullenly cried "Enough," but capping his defeat with a terrible oath and the wild pledge, "I'll be even with you, yet!"

Alternating as "first" and "second" in the four years race at school,—the two enemies had been at last separated by fate, the rich Coffin sending his son out to China as supercargo, and later, as third and second officer of the *Dreadnaught*, the smartest Kennebunk clipper of her day.

Hiram Worth knew of old Zenas Coffin's greedy craft!

In the church, town council, bank and local affairs of Huntington, the parchment faced old usurer was "Sir Oracle."

Everything came to him, farms, houses, town lots, bank stock, crippled estates, all the desirable loot of West Suffolk County disappeared in the vortex of this human maelstrom.

"I'll get the mortgage out of that old brute's hands!" growled Hiram, "and, if Jasper Coffin does not give Roletta a wide berth, I'll—," he forgot the rest, as he sprang off the quarter deck singing out, "All hands stand by to let go the anchor!"

For, a mile outside of the harbor mouth of wooded Cold Spring Bay, where the red flash of the old light house still feebly blinked, the rusty chains hoarsely rattled in the hawse pipes, as the "best bower" sank in ten fathoms of dead water, and the long cruise of the *Reindeer* was over!

Worth sprang back in surprise, as the alert skipper clambered up from the cabin, and squinted knowingly at the three crow nest barrels, aloft, from whence, the hardy "lookouts" had so often yelled that slogan of delight, "There she blows!"

The rosy dawn was now flushing faintly the beautiful shores of the bewitching bay, and the Sound was covered with drifting craft, whose sails gleamed ghostly white.

"I'll take the other two officers ashore, Hiram!" meaningly said the now alert Captain. "They must know nothing of our business! You must mind the ship till my return!"

"Not a soul is to be allowed to come on board but the customs officer! I've got all the ship's papers! I'll be off with a tug before night and the owners! I will pay the men off on board. Once they have signed the 'commutation' papers, they will make the three towns here, howl! It will take all day to get the money in small bills over from the Huntington Bank.

"I'll send Uncle Jabez on board, with your mother

and Aunt Mehitabel Wardour. Here are the keys of my lockers!

"Give 'em the best in the cabin! I've told the steward what to do! And, I've got a shawl apiece for them!

"Keep mum about the new cruise! Don't mention your good luck till the men have all left the ship! I'll get boat-keepers from our owners!"

"And, if anyone tries to board her?" sullenly said Hiram Worth.

"Harpoon 'em, by God!" cried the old sea rover. "Anyone but owners and the Deputy Collector! You hold your fortune in your own hands!"

"All right!" briskly cried Worth, when Jonas Starbuck said, "To-morrow, you can begin your sparkin' match with Roletta Armstrong. But you're a fool to speak the word till you've signed for the new cruise! Boy! You can have the pick of the whole North Shore girls in three counties! A man like you,—second officer, with fifty thousand clear dollars in sight before thirty!"

A dozen boats were stealing out already from the shore, for, the tall spars, the double checker board sides,—the eight whale boats,—with the homeward bound whip, told the aroused beach combers that the old *Reindeer* had climbed up safely from the under world after twisting half around this terrestrial sphere.

Two stout quartermasters, with capstan bars as weapons, guarded the Jacob's ladder under Starbuck's private orders.

Throwing his hand up, to the nearest fisher boat, old Jonas cried, "Pipe all hands up to grog, Mr. Worth! Pay will be made on the capstan head, before sundown!

"Cook has orders to give the men anything they want! My steward will serve the three grog rations out,—a half pint each to every man,—and there's a long box of five hundred cheroots!"

Skipping down the side, in five minutes, Jonas Starbuck's burly form was lost behind the old white light house on the east head of the tranquil bay.

Cheers, yells and frantic delight followed the boatswain's announcement,—as the men turned to for a frolic, beginning to heave up their chests on deck, ready for shore.

Sternly regardant, with his revolver belted on, Hiram Worth warned off every one of the now clustering boats,—while old Bill Jenkins, a hairy chested giant, tossed into the ten fathom water, a rebellious "clam digger" who had tried to board the *Reindeer*.

Secure now in his control,—the young man gazed,—with a throbbing heart,—at the well remembered scenes of his youth.

Every familiar headland was tinged with delicate green,—and the sun's golden lances brought out the Connecticut shores from a bank of gray pearly haze!

Straight as a Pawnee, tall and handsome, Hiram's glances lingered lovingly on every cape and headland.

Eaton's Neck, Northport, Lloyd's Neck, South Neck, West Neck, and Centre Port, all recalled many a hunting frolic, many a fishing cruise! He could see the storied old town of Huntington, bowered in the familiar scenes of his school boy days!

Here was Comac, Dix Hills, West Hills, Long Swamp, Sweet Hollow, Halfway Hollow Hills,—where he had so often wandered with the sloe eyed Roletta Armstrong! His brow darkened at the thought of his enemy, Jasper Coffin.

"I'll get the old place out of the old man's clutches first, then, I'll settle with Mr. Jasper. We'll have it out this time, but, only after Roletta is my promised wife! Starbuck is right!

"This cruise to come will make me the richest young seafaring man on the North Shore, and, Roletta shall be a lady, and wear silk!"

He could not see the old Colonial farm house of the Armstrongs just over the line of Suffolk County, over the ridge fought for so bitterly in 1640 and 1646, between the stubborn town of Oyster Bay, and its giant neighbor, Huntington, a village six by twenty miles in extent! An old Colonial giant!

But his heart was anchored there, under those far away green trees!

"Mother will soon have all the news!" he sighed. "I can wait till to-morrow! I'll keep Uncle Jabez with me to-night and take his advice!"

Of the loyalty of the bewitching girl whose picture smiled in his cabin,—he had never dared even to doubt!

"True as old Polaris, shining out clear and blue, far up, aloft, marking the axle of the steady world!" he murmured.

His heart beat with a wild anticipation! He longed to crush that glowing beauty to his breast, and tell her of the triumphs of his wild career,—and of the other golden gifts of fortune yet to come!

As the sun grandly climbed the heavens, he could see Cold Spring Harbor arrayed in gala attire.

Floating flags, darting skiffs welcomed the *Reindeer*, and already a six-oared whale boat was skimming out of the long purse-shaped bay, with the gold banded official, ready to board the *Reindeer* in the name of the distracted "Uncle Sam," still in the throes of the bloodiest Civil War of modern times.

There were the dark old barracoons of the whaling settlement on the west side,—the wheezy old flour mill by the pond,—the two old woolen mills, the ancestral homes of the rich Jones clan, with the two upper lakes gleaming through the scanty verdure of the whispering trees,—and the wooded slopes of Cove Neck and Cooper's Bluffs.

Around the shores of Cow Bay, the village of Oyster Bay stretched along the sandy shores,—the largest town tract in historic Queens.

There was the little old church where George Fox, the apostle of the Quakers, had once preached in thunder tones.

There, also, the ruins of the fort builded by Tory De Lancey's "New Raised Corps" in "seventy-six",—to overawe the neighbors of the boy martyr, Nathan Hale.

There, too, the old colonial residences where Colonel Simcoe junketed, where the light hearted Major André

flirted with the loyalist belles, never fearing the rope so soon to tighten on his handsome neck, doomed by Fate in a grim revenge for the gifted boy captain, Nathan Hale.

There was the "Locusts," the stately home of the DeKays, beautiful "Dosoris," the seat of the wealthy Coles, and many storied mansions telling of those jolly old squires, the Lloyds, Morrisises, Woolseys, Butlers, Jacksons and Westerns.

The memories of these Madeira drinking worthies were already fading into the mist of years, now wrapping old "Wawepeh" and "Nachaquatuck"—haunts dear to the vanished red men, whose sachem Assiapuno (otherwise Moheness), in 1653, sold out the birthright of the Martinecock Indians, to the crafty Connecticut settlers, on terms as pitiful as were fixed when Manhattan Island, went to the Dutch.

"A fair land of liberty and of beauty!" mused Hiram. "I will make this long cruise," he fondly prophesied, "then come back rich, and I'll buy Roletta a colonial home, or, else, join our two places, and she shall be the star of two counties."

When the customs officer sternly took charge of the deck, Hiram Worth's pride kept him from interrogating a stranger as to his beloved one.

The sailors were easily caught in the snares of the crafty Jonas Starbuck, for, already the crafty revel had made progress!

Flushed with drink, they were bawling their sea songs, and all now ready to eagerly snatch the "scanty harvest" of their three years' toil.

"You fellows had better all ship again, as soon as you can!" growled the Customs Inspector, after the Deputy Collector had sealed all the hatches, and gone shorewards.

"The last draft is on, and General Grant is going to move on Richmond to fight it out with 'Uncle Robert Lee!' The towns are full of sick and wounded soldiers, and, they say that Grant will plant a hundred thousand dead men on the road to the capital of Jeff Davis' Land."

These ominous hints of a wholesale butchery, stirred the men, as they passed their sea chests before the Inspector's careless eyes.

Poor spoil of these simple children of the ocean wave! The carved whale tooth, the pearly nautilus, shark's tooth swords, Polynesian war clubs, the quaint trinkets of Japan, Hawaii, and the Kuriles, all these little mementoes of lands of palm and coral, with the furs and curios of the glacier armed shores of Alaska and Siberia, these were all mustered for the "sweet-hearts and wives," many of whom had sadly given up the *Reindeer*, as already gone to Davy Jones' "Locker!"

But, while Hiram Worth, with his glass, watched Jabez Simpson's well remembered catboat, tacking down the bay, a half mile off, his heart sank within him, as he saw no girlish form in the swift "plunger," where two matronly shapes alone were visible, with a burly man at the helm, easily recognized as Uncle Jabe.

"Roletta! Dead! My God!" gasped Worth, as a horrible thought came to deaden the triumph of this home coming.

A few words with the Customs Inspector told him that the three towns had been stirred in a wild ferment, since the arrival of the Block Island message, three days before.

"I'll know all soon, now!" gasped the young officer, as he could see the old *Falcon* beating up with her pennants bravely flying, and he knew that one more tack would bring his home party alongside the battered old whaler, whose oaken ribs enclosed a fortune of three hundred thousand dollars.

Leaping to the main deck, he ordered the gangway lowered and then waited, with bated breath, for the news of the woman who was more than life to him now.

CHAPTER II.

JONAS STARBUCK'S CONSPIRACY.

On shore, in a gray old mansion hidden in first growth trees, at this very moment, the triumphant Jonas Starbuck was gaily "splicing the main brace" with a trinity of the delighted "owners," in whose interest the sly old skipper was preparing to rob the men who had dared a hundred deaths for the "fat take" which bulged the sides of the veteran *Reindeer*.

The oldest Medford rum, and the best cigars ornamented the council table, where the cautious capitalists waited while a messenger of their "Council of Ten" had been despatched with their leading wiseacre to Huntington to bring over the paper funds to pay off the swindled crew.

For ten miles each way, the countryside was in a wild ferment, the chorus "Jack's come home to-day!" ringing out in many an humble household.

But, cool gleaming eyes, vulpine faces, the pursed lip of the crafty miser, surrounded Captain Starbuck, while the plans of swift action were soon formulated.

"There's a couple of hulks here to take the oil, we can store all our bone and trade, our furs and ivory, in our warehouses here,"—said Squire Avery.

"We gave Coffin warning to have fifty thousand dollars in small currency ready!

"I can get rid of the men for thirty-five to forty," cautiously said Starbuck.

"You can settle with the two officers on 'final statements!'

"All I ask is that Hiram Worth and I shall get all our cash to-morrow, on the full figures.

"Without him, no new cruise! I must have him! He, alone, found the pocket in the Arctic beyond Behring Straits, where we filled the ship. Remember, he goes out as Second Officer."

"Good!" was the complacent chorus, "Coffin, as our banker, will name the First Officer, the old man has some one in his eye already! You can also pick the

third, Captain Starbuck," slowly said Deacon Isaac Hatch, the second owner. "We want a man who will work in our interest, under you.

The rattle of wheels broke off the two hours' conference, as Jonas Starbuck rose.

"Then, if I get rid of the men for thirty-five thousand, you will bring my forty thousand and Worth's twenty out to-morrow morning.

"Squire Avery, I will sign the receipts only for twelve thousand, Worth for three, and so, you can clear out Eke Griffin and Cephas Sanderson for six and four. They must suspect nothing!

"That leaves you two hundred thousand dollars, clean. And, Worth and I, sign at once for the long cruise, when we get our money!"

There was a consensus of nods, as the committee man entered saying, "Hurry up, here's our money all ready! Zenas Coffin himself is coming over to see that no stray shell back gets the news of the high price of oil and bone to the men!"

In fifteen minutes, a swift steam tug bore the whole party out to the distant *Reindeer*, with three veteran clerks and the village notary to seal all the receipts "for ship and owners."

A heavy barge trailed behind ready to receive the returning whalers and their sea chests, for the delivery of which a whip was rigged already on the *Reindeer*, from whose decks, now a pandemonium, the steam tug was greeted with three wildly discordant cheers.

At the head of the ladder, Hiram Worth, grave and troubled, met his superior. "I'll take the ship now, Mr. Worth," gladly said Starbuck, gazing around with a secret delight to see how well his quartermasters and stewards had followed out his private orders for the debauching of the men, now eager to grasp their hard won money!

"Pipe all hands to the capstan, Boatswain," said the cheery Starbuck, as he whispered to the third officer. "Leave this all to me! You can have the cabins with your people! The tug will tow these 'moss backs' all

ashore on the barge, when they are paid off, and, then return and move the ship into the harbor!

"The keepers can come on at nightfall and by to-morrow noon, my boy, you will be free; after you get your money, and sign.

"All is O. K.!—We are safe for our long cruise! You are 'Second Officer,' from to-morrow morning!"

Leaving Starbuck to deal out the thirty per cent. of the men's dues, in return for their full authenticated receipts before the crafty group of clerks and owners, the young man, with a heavy sigh, disappeared in the Captain's cabin.

The burden of consenting in the infamous "scaling down" of his shipmates weighed heavily on him.

But, shouts of joy, and wild laughter, followed him, as the men rapidly tumbled over the ship's side, followed by their chests, swiftly sent over by willing hands.

Before them lay the "long spree," the sailor's Nirvana, after the drudgery of the unexampled voyage.

There was a bountiful table spread in the cabin, and hearty old Jabez Simpson sat at the head of the table, bronzed and rugged; gnarled as an old oak tree, yet hale at sixty-five.

By his side, on the right, sat pale faced Mary Worth, in her black gown, anxious and motherly, her dark hair streaked with shining silver and drawn over the thin temples, while opposite was the keen eyed Mehitabel Wardour, sturdy, grave, her brow wrinkled with deep thought, showing, in her independent manner, the woman of property, the widow, whose "cruse" was filled with a bountiful store of oil.

There had been the usual flood of motherly tears, the hysteric welcome of the hungry heart, and, all the relief of the long deferred hopes which make the heart sick.

But, while the mother watched her son's darkened brows, old Jabez informed by a few whispers, was mentally "figuring up" his nephew's share of the profits, while he gravely enjoyed the feast, after "splicing the main brace," in no niggardly way.

A telegraphic signalling of meaning winks, had made the heart of the forehanded Mehitabel Wardour light, and she, also, heartily entered into the joy of the hour.

"There's no need to be cast down, my boy, because Roletta Armstrong's away for a week! She went down to Brooklyn with her mother the very day before we got your signal from Block Island!

"But, she's just the same, my boy, just the same! You see, we didn't look for you home till next season!"

All the big New Bedford firms have sent orders to their ships to lay in hiding till the *Alabama* is caught! Pesky critter! Uncle Sam has forty war vessels now on the lookout for her, and, there's a rumor that she passed the Cape of Good Hope, into the South Atlantic, two months ago, with her machinery well worn, and needing repairs.

"She'll run into our trap yet! Grant will soon push Lee to the wall.

"Sherman will come around and join him, breaking up Joe Johnston, so, next year, we'll have clear seas!

"There might have been some word, a letter, even!" said Worth, rather doubtfully.

"And how could there be, my son?" gently said Mary Worth, "when many had given you up for dead, and, as Uncle Jabez says, while those in the secret, expected you to stay out another year, landing all your oil and bone and goods at Honolulu!"

"Every week since you sailed, Roletta has been with me, for one afternoon!"

"You'll find it all right!" briskly said the robust Mehitabel Wardour, the only surviving sister of Worth's energetic father.

"What we want to know, is that you've not come home empty handed! For, Zenas Coffin's mortgage hangs heavy over your mother! Fifteen hundred dollars and the interest! He wants your mother's home—not the money! And, he would not let us pay it off! Mary has fretted herself to death, all or most, your Uncle and I could not force him to take the money, for, you joined in it! Thank God you are here!"

"The old dog!" fiercely cried Hiram, starting up!

"I'll see that paid and discharged to-morrow, before sunset, before I——" he caught his mother's imploring eye and then, just saved Jonas Starbuck's secret.

Checking himself, he said, "I am sure of more than enough money to clear all away!"

"Thank God for that!" cried all the three visitors, in chorus.

There was a rising cheerfulness about the board when Uncle Jabez had forced a couple of good tumblers of Madeira upon his nephew, whose promotion and success filled the ancient whaler's soul with joy.

"All's bright before you, my boy, now!" proudly cried the ex-captain. "Don't go to extremes with that leather faced Zenas Coffin! He is now the richest man in Huntington, and as rich as any squire in all Suffolk!"

"Besides, he is the heaviest backer of the Whaling Company, so, don't spite him for nothing!"

Hiram's face darkened. The spell of his enemy's father seemed to hang over him, like a lowering cloud.

"Where's that boy of his, that Jasper?" slowly said Hiram, hiding his agitation from his anxious mother!

"Well! There's been a good deal of 'come out' to Jasper Coffin!" reluctantly said Uncle Jabez.

"More'n I ever expected to see! He went into the Navy just after the *Reindeer* sailed! You know this cruel war come on, in three months! And, he's done right well! He came back a volunteer lieutenant of the Navy, and saved quite a fleet down by Charleston, or Savannah!"

"Our people had gone up the river with six or seven boats, on a raid. The rebels swung a heavy three masted schooner loaded with coal across the river, at the narrowest place, and then trained field batteries on our ships.

"Coffin had one of the strong new double enders, a swift boat, and a rattling good one! He took the lead, cracked on all steam, cut through the blocking vessel, turned her plum over, and so, made a way out for the rest of the fleet! He has a medal of honor for this!"

"But he got a bad wound from a piece of shell, and

then was promoted and brought home! He's had to throw his rank up, and resign three months ago, for he's not able for active service any more—but he is a regular out and outer."

"Has he been around here long? I suppose he is the one hero of the hour!" bitterly said Hiram, with a secret self accusation of inferiority.

"Why, no!" innocently replied the ex-whaler, handling the square case bottle of fine old cognac, and making himself a grog.

"He was mostly down at Brooklyn Hospital, and he spends his time over to York, but his father can't do enough for him! They do say the old man will buy a big interest in a China ship and send him out as Captain or First Officer!

"He's got a fine navigation training anyway, in these three Navy years! He has no intimates here, least ways, none that I know!

"But it is useless for the old usurer to dream of this, till we get the war busted and the *Alabama* out of the way! Why? Insurance is 25 to 60 per cent. on American vessels now, and we've sold nearly all our ships to the British, French, Germans, or Italians! And," gloomily said Jabez, "What's not sold, is laid up!"

"I'm glad he's not here!" shortly said Hiram, avoiding his mother's eye.

"I don't want to run across his bows till I've seen that mortgage go into the fire!"

"Promise me, my boy," tremulously cried Mary Worth, when the bluff old Jonas Starbuck burst into the cabin.

There was a wild chorus of yells as the tug moved away and Captain Starbuck mopped his brows and then fell upon his old shipmate, Jabez Simpson.

"Paid off every mother's son of them; rich as lords for a week, then everyone busted, and all glad to ship again."

With noisy hilarity, the skipper brought out a beautifully embroidered Chinese crepe shawl for each of the astonished women.

After a clumsy but heartfelt presentation, the vic-

torious old schemer said, "Now, the tug will be back in an hour! I will be glad to take both you ladies ashore with me, after the ship has been towed into her moorings!

"I shall ask Uncle Jabez to keep Hiram company here to-night, for there will be only the Customs Inspector left on board.

"The foks'al will be locked, the hatches are sealed, and I'll send two ship keepers off to-night to keep watch! There's the *Falcon* alongside Jabez, and I'll be on board at daybreak to let Hiram go home to you, after noon, to-morrow! We have a little bit of business, first, to settle! Rather pleasant, eh, Hiram!

"I must go to-night over to Huntington and make my report to Zenas Coffin, who is now our heaviest stockholder!

"Lord! How money comes to that old boy! Over half a million, now, they say!"

"The ancient mariner" filled up a "horn," a good stiff one, of the cognac, and then sighed in a covetous fever.

Some sudden foreboding caused Hiram to draw the old man aside.

He hoarsely whispered, "Zenas Coffin has a fifteen hundred dollar mortgage on our home farm! I will not sign those articles, to-morrow, unless you bring me that mortgage cancelled and the 'satisfaction piece' duly certified to me, as a part of my pay! I will not speak to the old devil! He has harrassed my mother like a hungry vulture! The interest and all, runs up to about seventeen hundred!"

"Nonsense! Boy!" grinned Jonas Starbuck. "Money makes friends! I'll give old Zenas my cheque and bring you the ready cash, less the mortgage. That's all you will be short of twenty thousand! The men went down like a flock of penguins under the club! But, boy, keep your own counsel!

"Don't let your aunt, old Jabez, even your mother, know that you and I are paid double! The crew might 'kick' like fools! They are all mad to ship again to

avoid the draft! We're shut of Eke Griffin and Cephas Sanderson!"

"All right!" sternly said Worth. "Keep old Coffin, and his hopeful son away from me, and I'll go through fire and water for you! As for the settlement, I'll keep your secret! I've plans of my own, that need quiet!"

An hour later, the crew of the tug bowed up the anchor and before the sunset shimmered in golden waves on the Sound, the weather beaten old *Reindeer* was doubly anchored far up Cold Spring Harbor's magnificent land locked inlet.

Hiram Worth had only time to take his happy mother into his own little cabin! "You'll burn that mortgage, with your own hand, to-morrow night, mother!" he said, throwing his strong arms around her frail form. "You shall never want for anything any more!"

"Do not leave me again, my son!" sobbed the shaken woman! "The farm will easily keep us all!"

"One more cruise!" he whispered. "As a Second Officer, and, then, I'll give up the sea! I've already given my word! But, care shall never reach you!"

Mehitabel Wardour gazed at her handsome nephew as she stood on the gangway ready to go down into the tug.

"Hiram!" the sailor's widow cried, "I'm proud of you, and your brave father was Captain of an East India liner. Your father was my brother!—My husband, too, was a captain! The day you become captain,—Jabez and I will make our wills and leave you every dollar we have! And on to-morrow night, you'll eat the best home dinner that ever was cooked in Suffolk County! Don't you fret about Roletta! The girl will jump at you!"

Sly old Jonas Starbuck set out a five hundred box of the best Manilas for his old shipmate Jabez, and then, gave his chum the key of his locker.

"Don't let the boy go mad about all this love nonsense, Jabez!" he whispered. "Love can wait! Money is the only thing in this world! Money makes the mare go! I want the boy with me on my next cruise. Hold

him up, and I'll let you into a bit of a good thing! But keep silent, for he's as shy as a wood cock!"

"Leave all that to me," heartily cried the delighted Jabez. "Mehitabel Wardour will get word to Roletta up at Brooklyn, and I'll hold the boy down! I have a few loose thousands and I would like to take a snack in your next private trade!"

"Done!" cried Jonas with sparkling eyes. "Stick by me, and, I'll stick by you!"

Huntington, Oyster Bay and Cold Spring were in a carnival of rejoicing that night over the lucky return of the *Reindeer*, braving storms and the fleet corsair, the *Alabama*, and Captain Starbuck and old Zenas Coffin sat up till midnight over their crafty plans in the banker's stately mansion at Huntington.

All unconscious of treachery, Hiram Worth watched the silent stars sweep over Cold Spring Harbor as he paced the deck with his uncle, while at Brooklyn, a delighted woman returning from the theatre, whispered good night to a handsome young fellow in a naval officer's natty uniform.

"I forgot to tell you, Roletta," carelessly said Jasper Coffin, "the *Reindeer* dropped her anchor in Cold Spring harbor to-day."

The beautiful girl still in her theatre wraps, turned pale and clasped her hands in a sudden agitation upon her sculptured bosom.

"What shall I do? What can I do?" she cried in a sudden terror.

Never had the belle of Huntington looked so entrancing!

"Leave all that to your mother, to my father, and to me!" the rich man's heir whispered.

"No one need to know, and, if you only listen to me, all will be well. I've had a telegram from my father to meet him at Jamaica! He's a wise old fox! Stay here all to-morrow! And, let your mother and my father do the business! Don't go up to Huntington till I see you again!"

"Till then, wear this ring for me!"

He drew a splendid diamond ring from his finger

and, then, placed it on the trembling little hand which was clasped in his own.

"I must hide this!" murmured Roletta, as she fled away to her own room. It was the sale of a soul!

Far away in Cold Spring Harbor, Hiram Worth started, as a falling star shot across the heavens! A sudden chill seemed to freeze his heart! "Let us go in, Uncle Jabez!" he cried. "It's been a lonely homecoming without seeing Roletta!"

"Wait, only wait, my boy!"—cried the sly old ex-whaler.

"Everything comes round in this world, to the man who waits! Hold hard with old Jonas Starbuck, my boy, and your fortune is made!"

"There's one good thing!" muttered Hiram, as he turned in, "that hopeful son of old Zenas Coffin is out of my path! The rest is all clear sailing now and, no lee shore!"

But that fateful night, two men, their hearts filled with the bitterest hatred, dreamed of the same woman, who had sobbed herself to sleep, in the self torture of the born coquette.

"It will be rather a neat programme," mused Jasper Coffin. "I'll back my old governor against the world! And once under my heel, by heavens, I'll make Hiram Worth squirm, and then, laugh at him!"

CHAPTER III.

THE NEW FIRST OFFICER.

The lowing of kine from the forest fringed shores, the "early village cock's" clarion cry awakened, at day-break, the excited Hiram Worth whose ears had long been attuned to the hoarse snort of the walrus, and "the wolf's long howl from Oonalaska's shore."

Heavy hearted was the young son of Anak, for all his impending good fortune. He rubbed his eyes as Uncle Jabez burst into his cabin cheerily crying, "show

a leg, my boy! Cap'en Starbuck is out there jawing the ship keepers and Bill Tarbox has a fire in the galley, already."

When Worth stepped out of the cabin door, old Jonas Starbuck, long and lean and lank as are the ribbed sea sands, was already "renewing those pleasing assurances" with the burly old sea dog Jabez Simpson, who was as brown and sturdy as the battered oaken figure-head of any of the old Dutch bowed whalers lying in the sapphire harbor.

The sleepy Customs Inspector and the ship keepers hovered around the galley whence came the cheering odor of the fragrant Mocha, settled with cod fish skin.

Bill Tarbox, a battered old human hulk, with one eye permanently out of repair, showed in his uncertain navigation, the effects of "a night out with the boys."

"All goes on well, Hiram!" said the furtive eyed Starbuck, drawing the young lover aside. "The men are already signing for the new voyage! They all want to avoid the war draft! We will fool them all! Bill and the ship keepers will pack all your things and I'll send them over to Ma' Worth's to-night. We'll put an outside force on the *Reindeer*.

"Just as soon as she is empty she goes to Greenpoint for docking, recoppering and to be rerigged all 'ship shape and Bristol fashion.'

"There's any amount of stores and cooperage (all knocked down), here ready now.

"You are to go down to New York and lay in the whole new outfit of bomb guns, eight new boats, lines, all gears, ammunition, and the usual findings.

"When you are done, I'll have the ship all ready and she will take all our private trading goods on, before I have her towed back, and July first, we'll skin out of here quiet. Old man Coffin, Deacon Hatch, and Squire Avery will keep the whole crew together. We will clear out of here as if we were just going to bowse around on the edge of the Gulf Stream for 'Bermuda hump backs,' on a short cruise.

"But, at Sag Harbor, I'll get our new first officer, the third mate and a dozen Shinnecock Indians and New

Bedford harpooners. We can have the pick of all the Cape Cod men now! Silence, secrecy, mum's the word!"

"How about that mortgage?" shortly said Hiram Worth.

"I fixed all that with old Zenas," briskly said Starbuck. "Seventeen eighty's the figure! Here is two hundred and twenty dollars for a starter, to make even two thousand.

"Before noon the new articles will be here, and I will have the canceled mortgage with your satisfaction piece.

"And then, old Zenas will send you an envelope, with eighteen new one thousand dollar bills. That makes the whole twenty thousand!

"By gum! I settled with the men for their oil, at fifty cents a gallon, the bone at eighty, and the whole cargo has just been sold by telegraph, for two twenty a gallon, for the sperm oil, and three dollars eighty, a pound, for bone. This here crinoline and hoopskirt craze has trebled the price of bone! And the government wants every drop of the sperm oil for the Light House Board!"

It was a jolly breakfast, after all, when Bill Tarbox had caught "his second wind," braced up by the experienced Captain.

For Jonas Starbuck, taking Worth down into his little cabin, whispered slyly, "Aunt Mehitabel Wardour went down to Brooklyn at day break, and I fancy you'll find Roletta Armstrong at the table, when you eat your first home dinner."

"How much money shall I leave in your hands for the trade and our private speculation?" said Hiram Worth.

"I will put in five thousand, you, two, and your Uncle Jabez, three!" said the astute Starbuck. "We will take on five hundred barrels of rum at Honolulu, and that Russian Consul at the Kurile Islands, will give me a permit to run in 'for water,' to Emperor's Bay, Yamsk in the Ochotsk, Kamschatka and the mouth of the Kolima River.

"He's got a schooner of his own, the *Favorite*, of Fair Haven, under American papers.

"All those Russian officials are sly thieves! I fixed it all up with him! For if they did not give me the *Reindeer*, I was going out alone to Nagasaki to buy a vessel and singly make the trip.

"But, I've got money enough now, and so I can swing our owners. I'm a slave no longer, thank God!"

"How does Jabez come to be in this with you?" asked the astonished Worth.

"He will watch the owners for us and look out for my wife's business. Betsy Starbuck is not as young as she was. It's all on the quiet, so don't say a word to Jabez. He will watch over Roletta for you, too, my boy and, only Jabez will know where to send our ship mail.

"For we will land all our furs and trade at Nagasaki, and send them right on to London. Owners will never know!

"Kussaroff, the Consul, will have the shore natives watch the right whales for us, and we will get every pound of baleen that the Siberian natives have. The rum will do the business! I give Kussaroff ten per cent. of the trade, and half the oil and bone that we take on the *Favorite*.

"I'll put an officer and ten of our crew on her! She will meet us at Behring Strait, for I'll run into Kodiak, and get all the furs and ivory that our friends can scrape up. Kussaroff is 'solid' with all the Russian governors at Sitka, Wrangel and Kodiak."

"And so I'm to hide all this from Jabez Simpson?" doubtfully said the astonished Worth.

"Yes!" cried Starbuck, grasping both his hands. "This is a dangerous secret. Conspiracy is an ugly word and old Coffin is a sharp skinflint. I'll handle Jabez! Keep your own secrets with the girl!

"See here, two to me, three thousand to her, leaves you thirteen thousand. Show up three thousand to your mother as your whole earnings, beside the paid mortgage. Be wise!

"Leave that in bank under her authority. You will have ten thousand left, and I can get you a mortgage

on the old Hilliard place. Bob Hilliard is going the pace!—It's worth forty now, and soon, fifty thousand. I'll lay all your money on that and take the mortgage in my name. It can be transferred to you, and you can leave it all in the bank at Hempstead, so no one will be the wiser. You see if we openly showed our profits, the men might kick and haul us up."

"Then, only Roletta Armstrong must know?" slowly said the promoted officer.

"Let her be satisfied with her three thousand! She is devilish ambitious. She twists her old mother around those pretty fingers. Bob Hilliard will never lift that mortgage, so, when you come home, you'll have the finest place in Suffolk to move into, three thousand clear rent, and Roletta as a lady, at your side."

"Why don't *you* take this mortgage?" curiously asked Hiram.

"I'm old, and my wife is failing. I will salt down all I have in United States bonds," sadly said Jonas Starbuck. "We have no one able to handle that farm, but you are young, with all life before you. We must cover our tracks, behind and before us. So, fix it all, on the private, with Roletta. Leave Jabez to watch out for us here, and let me manage him. You know what women are! If you don't, I do!"

"If your mother, that smart Mehitabel Wardour, or this bright eyed sweetheart gal knew our plans, the whole story would be soon all over Long Island, and then we would be ruined."

"You are right," assented Worth. "But, it all seems too good to be true."

And so, Worth resolutely packed up his private luggage, under Jonas Starbuck's strict injunctions to let all the shore gossips know that "he had left the ship for good."

"That Sag Harbor scheme of taking on our North Sea outfit there, will leave the whole community lost in a fogbank," chuckled Jonas.

Before eight bells, Hiram Worth's heart beat high, when Starbuck brought in the envelope with eighteen bright new one thousand dollar bills.

"Here's the mortgage with the satisfaction piece," whispered Jonas. "The mortgage is already canceled, of record. Now, sir, just sign these articles as Second Officer, and then give me this clear receipt for all claims to date."

With an unfaltering hand, Hiram Worth signed under the place where Jonas Starbuck's name already appeared.

"Any First Officer named?" carelessly demanded Hiram.

"No! A mere figurehead will do. You and I will run the next cruise alone, only, of course, I must have a good navigator, as First Officer! No matter if he is an outsider!

"But we'll have two Third Officers, one to run the *Favorite*, with her native crew. Those fellows out there, only feel along the shore. Our First Officer will be hoodwinked, from first to last, for our own plunder goes away on the *Favorite*, if the owners give us any sort of a sea lawyer.

"Now, my boy," jovially cried Starbuck, "we will just hustle your things all into the *Falcon*. You'll find a basket of good champagne already in the catboat, and a thousand of my Manilas.

"Cap'en Jabez can land you in five minutes, and there's a carriage waiting to drive you home.

"Remember, not a word to a soul, of our new cruise. Just say to all, that you are to lay low a little while and rest.

"Remember, also, the three women are to be kept in the dark. Leave Jabez to me. I'll come over to your place when I want you."

"Give me a receipt now for this two thousand for use on joint account," said Worth, handing him two of the new bills.

"All right, my hearty," cried Starbuck, slapping him on the back.

"Next week, I'll have that Hilliard mortgage ready to transfer to you. A word, put your money safely all on deposit in the Hempstead Bank. Don't go near the Huntington Bank!

"Old Coffin is suspicious, keen nosed, and I've had hard work to frighten him away from fooling around the *Reindeer*.

"But, he is quietly buying up every loose share of stock in the Cold Spring Whaling Company.

"They will declare no public dividend on this run! For Avery, Coffin and Hatch are all smug churchmen! They will settle with the stockholders, as we did, with the crew, and thus, make a private 'rake-off' of fifty thousand dollars in gold, to each of the three Managing Directors."

"Where's the hopeful Lieutenant?" gruffly asked Hiram.

"Settling his accounts, down at the Brooklyn Navy Yard," calmly said Jonas.

"Beyond an occasional Sunday dinner at home with his father, the three towns have never seen him. He is a swell now! A regular high roller!

"He's grown far too big a man for home society."

"So much the better," growled Hiram.

"Does Zenas Coffin know that I am going out with you?"

"Certainly," frankly said Starbuck. "I told him I would not go unless you took sole charge of the boats, whaling gear, bomb guns, and lances, and all the hunting and boat work. You'll stand no watch after we reach the Ochotsk, Behring and the Arctic.

"I will handle the trading, and you, all the whaling.

"Now, get away, my boy. You should be happy. Plenty of shot in your locker, at twenty-eight, with the handsomest girl on Long Island waiting for you, with open arms,—and a fortune in sight, with the Hilliard place ready to drop into your hands! You are a man to be envied!

"I would take that rich farm in, but I'm no double-natured Long Islander. Half farmer, half sailor!

"The only furrow I can draw, is my ship's wake, on the four seas. I am too old to get about and manage such a place.

"By gum! Colonel Hilliard dined George Washing-

ton in the old home after the great man was made President at New York.

"And, Lafayette visited it later, on his trip to America. There's a West India mahogany dining table there, that is three inches thick, and the old ten-gallon hammered silver punch bowl, still stands on the side-board.

"Poor Bob! he is drinking up the old place, acre by acre."

Worth really admired old Starbuck's "expert lying" when the boat was pushed off from the ship, and Jabez Simpson cocked his eye and took a slant with the *Falcon* to the village wharf.

The old ex-whaler's eye was rolling, but his hand was on the tiller, as firm as steel.

Starbuck roared out, after the departing pair, "Let me know what you're going to do, Worth."

"I'll try the coasting service for a while, Captain," artfully answered Hiram. "No more deep water for me, for some time!" It was a good ruse to kill off gossip, this open message.

The ship keepers and the Customs Inspector were all deceived easily by this artifice, but, old Bill Tarbox rolled his one remaining eye, as he stole back into the galley and took a pull of the Three Star Hennessy.

His own name was already scrawled on the new articles, for Captain Jonas Starbuck valued this prince of "Seacooks" who could boast the "cordon bleu" at a "sea pie," "lobscouse," or a "plum duff" as well as other recondite dishes picked up in forty years' practice of the arts of Brillât-Savarin.

The adroit Starbuck used Bill Tarbox as a "Marine Intelligence Office" to drain every secret of cabin, steerage and fok'sal, and in fact, the veteran "Soyer" could have run the *Reindeer*, himself, by rule of thumb, from Cold Spring up to Behring Straits and back.

For all his brilliant good fortune, Hiram Worth gazed back sadly at the *Reindeer*, the first ship that he had joined ten years before as a boat steerer.

Uncle Jabez, fired with his libations to Bacchus, happy in his secret association with Starbuck, was

hoarsely humming, "All along the coasts of the high Barbaree," as his moody nephew silently watched the *Reindeer*, laden almost to her scuppers.

Gone was the youthful ardor with which he had gone away on his first cruise in search of the huge *Baleinidæ*.

Then, a rosy boy, whose dimpled chin "had never known the barber's shear," now, a resolute and careworn man.

In those boyish days, he lived in romantic dreams.

"He rose at dawn, and, fired with hope,
Shot o'er the seething harbor bar:
And, reached the ship, and caught the rope
And, whistled to the morning star."

One thought alone filled his restless mind. Roletta Armstrong, the woman who had shaped his every aspiration. One face gleamed out before him, as the waters murmured under the gliding keel. The star of Huntington!—His own beloved!

He caught at Starbuck's blunt suggestion, with a new comfort. "She is ambitious."

"By heavens!" he cried, "she shall have the old Hilliard place, and ride in her carriage yet. Starbuck is right. There is nothing like money nowadays."

His vague fears had departed, for Jabez Simpson told him frankly how much time the young girl had spent at Brooklyn with her invalid mother. "No young spark has cut in there, Hiram," sagely said the keen old whaler.

"The two women have about made up their mind to rent their own farm, and to live with Abigail Armstrong's sister down in Brooklyn till the old lady gets shut of her asthma. There's no great catch for her in these parts but young Jasper Coffin, and he has never been even seen to cross their threshold.

"Bless you! He can marry in high life up to York, now, with his Navy record; his good looks and his money would put him high up in banking or shipping circles—But, he'll follow the old man's wishes. Jasper's no fool, I'll tell you that."

"Is he as good looking as he was?" carelessly asked Hiram, as the *Falcon* swept into the little bay in front of Cold Spring village.

"Better lookin' than ever," frankly answered Jabez, as he brought the boat in with a neat swoop. "The Navy life gave him style; he's a neat dresser, an' his officer's uniform becomes him well.

"Light hair, you remember, one of them moustaches that's all the go, holds his head high, and looks 'the officer and gentleman' all over."

Hiram Worth sprung and let the mainsail rattle down, as he grimly muttered, "a lady killer, then. He's welcome to all the women in the world, *but one!* If he ever crosses my path, there'll be one dead man, or perhaps, two! But, I'm glad he's gone for good. 'High life' will be none too good for him."

Springing lightly ashore, Hiram Worth felt an electric thrill as the firm red earth of Long Island yielded under his bootheels.

There was the well remembered village! The one long street with its little shops, the scattered cottages, the dingy post office, the Hook and Ladder Company's hall, and the same lounging crowds around the tavern and "stores."

An old schoolmate waited there with a wagon for the luggage, and there was a roomy carriage with a strange driver.

He saw the same old line of oyster dredgers, disabled coasters, broken down yachts, fishing smacks and ancient derelicts, all smitten heavily by the hand of Time.

Out on the sand spit, the alongshore settlement greeted his eye.

Ship houses, the ways and repair yards, fishers' cabins and even a dingy overturned hull, once a slaver brig, where a stove-pipe now indicated a family residence.

Ancient clam diggers with tufted beards, hoary old human wrecks, with sad glittering eyes, waded around, with their legs immersed in the soft slush up to the

knees, gleaning their monotonous diet, in a patient resignation.

An extra bushel obtained meant a bottle of Medford rum,—i.e., the happiness of a whole day.

Out on the bay, four great lighters were being towed already out to the *Reindeer*, by an energetic tug, snorting and wheezing, and fifty sturdy 'longshoremen crowded the decks of the first.

"Old Starbuck is a genuine hustler," murmured Hiram, as he climbed into the rockaway.

On, through the long struggling street, the carriage dashed, giving Worth glimpses of the village maids encased in enormous hoop skirts, with "Balmorals" of gaudy hue, huge pendant "chignons" and raiment of rainbow colors which would have sealed their death warrants in any bull-haunted meadow.

"They think themselves beautiful," sighed the young son of Anak, who had not forgotten his academic education.

Great store of books had filled the *Reindeer's* cabin, and the swartly Worth was no whit behind his detested rival, Jasper Coffin, in that "book larnin'" which Jonas Starbuck frankly envied.

His "Bowditch,"—his sailing orders, his Nautical Almanac, this was the sum of the adroit old Starbuck's mental lore, but, at smelling out the nimble dollar, Starbuck was a marine Jay Gould!

A pang of shame caused Hiram Worth to drop his eyes as he saw the groups of blue-clad invalid soldiers, the little crowd of one-armed sailors, straggling marines, and gossiping recruits hanging around the office where a Veteran Volunteer Captain and a glib recruiting Sergeant were feeding out whisky to their intended prey, under the shadow of a huge American flag.

"I have missed making Jasper Coffin's gallant record," sighed Worth. "I have left my country in her hour of need!

"He at least, has sealed his manly bravery. But, I had no chance. We sailed before the war, and, now, —now, it is too late, if I would not lose Roletta."

This latent envy burned in his heart for a week, till

he realized that love, whisky or fat bounties, had really sent most of the Long Islanders "to the front," after the one sporadic burst of self-devotion of "the firing on Sumter."

He felt his own life mean, however, in comparison with the dashing record of Jasper Coffin, until the carriage passed the grove where the "fight to a finish" had forever settled Coffin's boyish hopes of "beating" his stalwart enemy.

"He never could stand up before me, in a fair fight," muttered Hiram.

"Thank God, he has drifted away from my path forever."

While the carriage slowly climbed the long hill between Huntington and Cold Spring, there was a parting at Jamaica, which would have driven Hiram Worth to madness, had he been a *Diable Boiteux*.

"Get right down to Brooklyn, my boy," craftily said old Zenas Coffin to his troubled heir.

"Let the girl go up to Huntington, with old Mrs. Wardour. I'll see the mother and fix it, all right. You must not approach Roletta publicly, while this boat steerer is at home. Don't notice him. Don't quarrel with him. We will simply hoodwink him. I'll get the *Reindeer* to sea at once, and then, you will see Abigail Armstrong knows which side her bread is buttered on.

"She was 'an old flame of mine' in her girlhood. And, she needs my money assistance, now.

"See the girl as you will, in private. Look out for that Mehitabel. She is an old brown tigress!

"Stay in Brooklyn, and the moment Roletta and Mehitabel start for the train, telegraph to me, here! I will come down to Fort Greene Place to-night and fix the whole thing up with Abigail.

"This fellow Worth must never see you near her, till he sails. After that, let me manage."

He whispered a few words which made Jasper Coffin's face gleam with a sudden joy.

"I thought I had them both tied up by mortgages," gravely said old Zenas, "but, the young harpooner in-

sisted on paying the mortgage off before he signed the new articles. Starbuck will steer him as I wish, for I'm going to operate with Starbuck in handling his money, while he is away. I'll take in the majority stock of that Company, for you. Keep cool! Avoid Worth! Leave the girl to her mother. I'll have them, both in Brooklyn, for over half the time the *Reindeer* lays up. And Roletta will soon see her way clear. Now, get away. Don't even mention Hiram Worth's name to the girl."

When his son had disappeared, the old banker slowly sought a private room at the Jamaica Hotel.

Thirty years seemed to roll away, as the parchment-faced old usurer recalled how the dashing Ezra Worth had stolen beautiful Mary Wardour away from him.

He chuckled, and then rubbed his thin hands together as he slowly drank his brandy and water.

"Blow for blow, woman for woman, a life for a life. I'll get even with the whole Worth and Wardour brood. I'm sorry that I missed that mortgage foreclosure. How I would have liked to have once seen Mary Wardour, on her knees, begging to me for her home.

"But, I'll have my revenge, and Jasper, my Jasper, too, shall have his way."

While the embittered old capitalist waited for his telegram, Hiram Worth had been driven past the old cemetery where the broken column with its foul anchor told of the last resting place of the man who had fairly won Mary Wardour's delicate youthful beauty away from the "money spinner."

"Did you see the girls in the village?" cried Uncle Jabez. "They made me think of the poem in the village paper:

"Ho! Whales that plough the briny seas
Repine not at your fate,
Your fat illuminates the world,
Your bones make women great."

It was before the days of the celluloid and steel-spring inventions, and before the mighty reservoirs of

the earth had given up the lakes of petroleum which have made kings of finance, revolutionized the lighting of the world, it being the transition time before electricity had changed the technique of every applied science.

But, Hiram Worth was thinking of other things than his jovial Uncle's raillery.

Far away, bowered in its trees, on Lloyd's Neck, he could see the old gray Armstrong house, now to him the casket of the rarest jewel on earth.

No hospitable smoke curled gracefully above the shading trees, and he sighed until the old apple orchard around his childhood's home showed the substantial colonial mansion of the Wardours, which had fallen to Ezra Worth's beloved daughter in the division of the once great farm, a half of which was now the homestead of the energetic Mehitabel, the relict of the last of the Wardours, drowned at sea with all his crew.

The young man's face was bright with tenderness, as his mother fondly clasped him in her encircling arms. "Not a minute will I rest, mother, I will not even sit down," cried Hiram, "till I see you burn this, in the kitchen stove. It will make our dinner all the sweeter!"

He handed to the delighted widow the cancelled mortgage and gaily flourished the satisfaction piece.

There were tears of exquisite happiness in Mary Worth's eyes as she saw the incubus of her long waiting years of debt oppression vanish in the forked flames and only leave blackened films behind, over which little fiery serpents still ran.

"Something for you," shyly said the enraptured woman, as she gave her son a telegram.

With eager eyes he devoured the few words. "Coming with Roletta. Have carriage at station, at six."

The signature "Mehitabel," told of the energetic emissary of Love.

"Not a word from her," blankly ejaculated Hiram as he threw himself into his father's old oaken chair of state.

"My son, you do not know a young girl's heart.



Wait, till she comes," said Mary Worth, with a tender glance of her softly shining eyes.

And so, under the breezy gossip of Jabez Simpson, secretly triumphant, Hiram's eyes feasted once more upon the simple splendors of an old sailor's best living room.

"Home is the sailor from the sea," he murmured, as the nodding Chinese mandarin on the mantel recalled his days of childish wonder, and every quaint curio of Ezra Worth's voyages brought up the kindly man who had woven tales of the weird sea life so often, with a wondering boy seated at his knee.

"This is the happiest day of my life," cried the last of his line, as he folded his mother to his breast.

Handing her two of the one-thousand-dollar bills, mindful of old Jonas' worldly wise counsels, Hiram said gaily, "These must go into the Hempstead Bank for you to-morrow. The wolf must not howl around your door till I come again."

And then, with the keen insight of mother love, Mary Worth fell upon his breast, for in the set features of her only boy, now restless at heart with the newly awakened thirst of gold, she saw the shadows of another parting.

But, Jabez Simpson, crafty in the interest of that sly old entangler, Jonas Starbuck, made the rafters ring with his rough hilarity, and a bottle of the Madeira laid away at Hiram's birth, had vanished long before the slanting shadows of the April sun, sinking to the West, called the restless lover away to the Huntington depot.

It was a bashful yet eager young giant who stood hat in hand when the train drew into the village station.

In all the bustle of recognition by old time friends with the alert Mehitabel as a dragon of propriety,—Hiram Worth felt words fail him as the graceful young beauty followed the duenna to the platform where a fine carriage, in unaccustomed splendor, awaited Roleta Armstrong.

But, it was no vision! This superb young beauty who walked a goddess and whose dark eyes thrilled the

pulses of her stalwart lover. At his side with a wistful light in her dark eyes, the woman who had haunted his dreams for three long years, smiled up at him, with glances in which he only read the sweet self-surrender of a heart all his own.

The lovely drive, through beautiful reaches where nature's bosom was half unveiled in the promise of the spring enchanted them, and the early stars were in the sky. The herds were all back at the homestead, when the handsome sailor caught the shrinking beauty to his heart and whispered, "Mine now, darling, mine, *forever!*"

But, the rosy lips which trembled under his kiss were pressed with no answering caress of their own! The guilty woman hiding in his arms recalled that flashing diamond hidden far away, the pledge of a compact without words, the token of a new bond as yet, unsealed.

For a mother's specious counsels had already shown the Delilah of Suffolk the middle path between danger on the one side, and a self-evident deceit, on the other.

And yet, hand in hand, the lovers went together over the threshold of the old house which had sheltered past generations of gallant Wardours and, where peace and love had crowded the married life of the woman whom Zenas Coffin hated still with the baffled desires of a thwarted life passion.

Fortunes favored every plan of the malevolent Zenas Coffin and his sly ally, Jonas Tarbox, in the presence of that covetous secret partner, Jabez Simpson.

The old homestead was all in gala attire and the snowy linen, the delicate china and crystal, the solid old family plate, made Mary Worth's gala table a reflection of old colonial days and substantial New England cheer.

The wines and beverages gave a touch of nautical free handedness to the festival, while the old oak paneled dining-room as well as the "best room," displayed the spoil of Ormuz and of Ind. And, the odor of lavender and dried rose leaves made the air quaintly pungent!

Alexandria and Stamboul, Shanghai and Canton, Singapore, Calcutta and Bombay, had been ransacked for the love offerings of the olden time, which spoke of Ezra Worth's "Heimweh" under the blazing sun of Cathay.

Following the quaint etiquette of the local squirearchy, Roletta Armstrong was kept silently on the defensive under the eyes of the two elder women. Both Mary Worth and Mehitabel Wardour felt that the presence of the young belle was a tacit seal to the still undeclared engagement which was supposed to follow up the long "keeping company."

There had been, however, an open avenue of retreat left to the brilliant Roletta, when brave Hiram Worth sailed away on the *Reindeer* as Head Hunter and Chief Harpooner.

There were golden years still to spare at seventeen when the tall, dark girl, slim in her youthful beauty, was yet merely lissome in her "beauté du diable," but now, with the seal of Brooklyn metropolitanism upon her, the self-possessed young queen of twenty had glided into a place of social dignity never occupied by the two careworn widows.

"Autres temps, autres mœurs!" The social order changes quickly!

The romance of the old clung to the steady and prosperous Mehitabel Wardour and a delicate fragrance of former beauty to Mary Worth, whose unfading charms still haunted the memory of the saturnine old Zenas Coffin.

In the shy social deference of the two seniors to their lovely young visitor, Hiram Worth saw all the possibilities of the golden future, after the Brooklyn seminary had given to this ambitious Suffolk girl something more than "Shakespeare, and the musical glasses."

Stately in figure, a glorious later womanhood was promised in her unsapped beauty, with those deep, steady, burning dark eyes and a low, flute-like voice.

The girl boasted a complexion of the tint of the creamy rose and Roletta Armstrong's magnetic charm,

her gliding grace and receptive queenliness left her bold lover bankrupt of words.

Hearty old Jabez Simpson soon drew out the slender chronicles of the Huntington circle which Hiram had known, the two dames fished in the geneological sea, for filaments of distant kinship and, in all the "embarras de richesses" of this formal feast, Hiram Worth still guarded his own secret from these three dissimilar women, as jealously as old Jabez hid his compact with Starbuck, from all the world.

The air of the old homestead, however, seemed stifling to Hiram, as he listened with downcast eyes to his proud mother's meaning hints as to his abandoning the sea.

"Now that the mortgage is paid off," defiantly said Mary Worth, "Hiram has two good farms to look forward to, with not a shadow on them in the way of debt."

"He has *yours*, Mary, of course," meaningly said Mehitabel Wardour, trifling with a merry thought, "but, *mine* goes to him only the day that he comes home as Captain, on his own quarter deck. Every Worth and Wardour that I know of became a captain and all of them worked a ship back from China,—'lunars,' and, all."

Hiram Worth laughed merrily.

"Don't fret, Aunt Mehitabel. I'm going to Hempstead to-morrow and I shall go down to New York, and put my name down for the Master's Examination, and so, take out a captain's certificate. Now, look out for your farm! I'll win it!"

"It's yours, my dear boy, for you and your wife, when you have once sailed your own ship 'over the Line,' with the homeward-bound pennant flying." Miss Roletta, in a choked voice, her eyes downcast, murmured, "Why not? Hiram has so quickly gone up to Third Officer! Another new cruise may bring him home a First, who knows? Then, he can easily demand a ship as Captain!"

Both Jabez and her lover darted inquiring glances at the young beauty of the sombre eyes.

"Does she know anything?" mused Hiram, and then he went away with Jabez into the dead Captain's sanctum for a long smoke, while the two kinswomen after the awkward Island etiquette, extracted, bit by bit, the details of the distressing asthma, which promised to keep Abigail Armstrong, a denizen of Brooklyn for another season.

Her sister, a well-to-do resident of the town which then boasted the great Beecher as its intellectual God, seemed to have anchored the widow Armstrong in Fort Greene place.

"And, you will leave your own place on Lloyd's Neck to go to rack and ruin?" demanded the surprised Mehitabel.

"We will rent it!" simply said Roletta, with a nervous glance at the alcove where Jabez Simpson was "blowing" as energetically as any beluga, or black fish.

Prim, strait-laced and wedded to olden traditions, the two sisters-in-law were embarrassed over the problem of leaving the young couple to "settle things" alone, for Jabez Simpson was a very Bull of Bashan, as regarded the lighter amenities of social life.

The Gordian knot was soon cut by the appearance alone of Hiram Worth, who gazed longingly in Roletta's eyes!

"Let us take one turn in the old orchard, Roletta," said her lover, cutting off a panegyric of Mehitabel Wardour.

For the happiness of Mary Worth was now too great for one gentle heart, the story of the burned mortgage lost nothing in its telling, and the two thousand dollar bills had been carefully handed around for examination by all of the three daughters of Eve.

Hiram luckily did not see the blanched face of his intended bride when Mehitabel Wardour bluntly said: "There's a man for you, straight as a Penobscot pine! What a husband he will make, for some lucky girl! An officer at twenty-eight, with two farms to look to, and every dollar that Jabez and I leave will go to him. Why, one more such cruise and he can go ahead and be as rich as that old death's head, Zenas Coffin, at sixty."

The young couple silently escaped, stealing out into the soft evening air of a balmy April, while Jabez Simpson, "bowling along bravely, with all sails set," artfully began to bring up the subject of Hiram's second cruise, after he had diligently mixed a tall glass of grog and had, in a cursory way, admired the quaint macaws and wing-spread flamingos which sprawled upon the two splendid Canton shawls which old Jonas Starbuck had so artfully thrown out as "ground bait."

"Injy, Chiny and the Arctic, for money, it's the sailor's Paradise!" deftly interjected Jabez.

"All along Long Island's, to-day, nothing but truck farming, oyster dredging, and clam scooping! I'm going to give Hiram all my sextants and books, my three fine Frodsham chronometers and I'll coach him up for his captain's certificate. When the boy gets that paper, he shall also have the gold pocket chronometer that Queen Victoria sent me for saving the crew of the sinking bark *British Grenadiers*."

With smiling lips and tear-gemmed lashes, the two loving women struggled between their love and pride, listening to the serpent voice of the crafty old sailor.

Out in the orchard, under the silver stars of night, lost in the soft hours of darkness so dear to lovers, the sailor told all his hopes and fears to the woman who cowered at his side, with her head inclined upon his bosom.

In all the timidity of a strong man's self-surrender, Hiram Worth hurried on, waiting for no response, eager to establish his title to this uncrowned queen, and to seal the secret bond between them, by the arrangement so skilfully suggested by Jonas Starbuck.

Within the old homestead, where the red lights gleamed from the thick window panes brought from Holland, three loyal hearts were chanting a chorus of praise in the glorification of the last of the Worths.

Stars of night swept in over the two lovers alone out there in the lonely orchard, now fragrant with the spring's coming.

While the man, a blinded Samson, yielded up his whole soul, the other, an unbranded young Delilah, lis-

tened, and, soon,—found the way made smooth for her, by the exceeding great love of her willing slave.

Far away, in the drawing room at Fort Greene Place, in the great big city of Brooklyn, the gray-eyed Zenas Coffin was now winding his web around Abigail Armstrong.

To the feeble protests of the timorous woman, the old banker replied with convincing eloquence.

"Leave all the details to me, Abigail!" confidently said the capitalist.

"Bring your girl slowly around to my way of thinking! I'll take your home place off your hands! Stay here! Starbuck will keep Worth busied, soon! I'll have Jasper carefully avoid him! I'll open you a credit and settle money on Roletta, but I alone can get this fellow off to sea with no suspicion! When he is once out of our way, you will soon see what I can do. I'll telegraph you and Jasper every time that Hiram takes the train for Brooklyn or York.

"Now, Jasper can hold his own with your lively daughter! Say the word and I'll take the home place off your hands, to-morrow. Taxes, insurance and all! I'll farm it, through one of my tenants and you must remain here and so keep your dear girl away from Mary Worth's meddling and Hetty Wardour's prying eyes. Can I count on you? Any girl in Suffolk County would jump to-day, at Jasper, with my money behind him. You know that I will never marry again! He will have it all, every dollar, and your daughter with my son, will tie our lives together as we might have done, but for that foolish quarrel, so many a long year ago."

"Leave her to me, Zenas! Roletta's not the girl to stand in her own light! But just how you will do this, I can't imagine!"

"That's my affair!" sternly said Coffin as he rose.

He slipped a well-filled pocketbook in the widow's hand. "Get the girl some pretty new dresses!" the old tempter quietly said. "If Jasper takes her out, he will not let her run against this fool! Don't be stingy with her. I have plenty! Now, telegraph up to her aunt,

to-morrow, for Roletta to come down to you, at once! You can be conveniently sick and keep her near you. Jasper will find his way, and let her easily manage this upstart harpooner. Can I trust you? I'll send the lease down to you by Jasper and I'll come in twice a week! Don't overdo things with your proud girl! Let Jasper make his own way smooth. He knows the trick!

"Flowers, gifts, music, the theatre, all these things will soon fill up her mind."

"Trust me to handle her, Zenas," cried Abigail Armstrong, as the old banker stole away, leaving her to gloat over the five one-hundred-dollar bills in the pocketbook!

"The first lady in Suffolk! Roletta would be a fool not to see her duty plain!" cried this housewife, shaken by the flattery of the man who was feeding the revenge of a lifetime.

As the old usurer hastened away he suddenly stopped in the dimly lit street.

"Starbuck is the very man! He will get rid of this fellow for me, for a consideration, yes, for a suitable consideration! There's the outlying stock!"

And so, dark dreams filled Zenas Coffin's mind while Roletta Armstrong, in that far away orchard on Huntington Hill, calmly answered the eager lover.

Hiram had unfolded all his cherished plan! Three thousand dollars, a thousand a year, was to be expended upon the long-dreamed-of "finishing," at the Brooklyn Seminary! It seemed a fortune!

And then, forgetting the injunctions of the self-protective old Starbuck, Hiram told of the future dowry of the Hilliard place. He was blinded and bewitched in his passion!

"It is like a fairy story!" the ambitious girl said. "And you say that I must not tell my mother, nor any one else! How can I explain?"

Hiram Worth saw at last the dark shadow which such treasure trove would cast upon the woman he loved!

"Darling!" he fondly cried, "Tell her only this, that

I must make another cruise! Nothing more! But tell her surely, that as my promised wife, you can honorably take this from me. What need we fear? I will have all Jabez and Aunt Mehitabel's property and you shall see the ten-thousand-dollar mortgage on the Hiliard place before I put it in the Hempstead Bank!"

Suddenly, the girl faced him!

"Give me a week! Take me over now, to Aunt Manning's home. Let me go down to Brooklyn to-morrow. No one must know. Give me a week to win my mother over. I will come back, in a week, to Aunt Manning's! She will send for you alone, to come and dine with us.

"If you keep all your secrets from your family, you must also help me to keep all from the gossips here and—so—to guard your own plans. For, as you say, all depends on no one knowing of the *Reindeer's* cruise! Will you be patient?"

"If you will wear my ring!" ardently cried Hiram,

"Wait for a week!" said the handsome Delilah, whose gleaming eyes answered him as he rained kisses on her lips. And, the light in her eyes was a living lie!

CHAPTER IV.

"OFF WITH THE OLD LOVE—ON WITH THE NEW."

That night, as Roletta Armstrong loosened her silken hair, in her room at the Manning house, she drew out the splendid diamond ring which was hidden in her faithless bosom.

"His father is the richest man in all Suffolk," the proud beauty murmured. "I must find a way! If Hiram knew of this, there would be bloodshed. He would kill Jasper! And I," she faltered, "could then drudge my life out as a school teacher! I would lose them both! Can I trust to my mother?"

And the stalwart sailor, who laid himself down to rest in the well-remembered room that night, never

dreamed that pride and villainy, flattery and woman's weakness, were all compassing his ruin, while his wealthy rival smiled over a coming triumph.

Jasper Coffin had his own soliloquy. "I'll leave it to my father to handle the crafty mother! As for the girl," he saw his own handsome reflection in the glass and then, sighed in an easy contentment.

"It's all plain sailing after Worth is duped, but I dare not show my hand yet! I'll pay him off for every insult of the old days, and I'll see him in the gutter, yet!"

When morning dawned, the three villages of Huntington, Cold Spring and Oyster Bay, were all agog with the flurry of the crew of the *Reindeer* getting rid of their hard-earned money. It was a mad revel!

They paraded the streets in groups with the "boughten" veteran recruits, now holding off for "high bounty," and who were being lavishly entertained by the bounty agents, tavern keepers and recruiting officers.

Jabez Simpson and the bewildered Hiram Worth were all early astir, and busied with their half confidences.

There lay before the young officer the visit to Hempstead to discreetly deposit his ten thousand dollars, and to open a bank account for his mother, ostentatiously placing only the two thousand to her credit and then there was the public filing of the satisfaction of the Zenas Coffin mortgage which had been hanging as a sword of Damocles over the fortunes of mother and son. This was a life triumph!

The apparition of Jonas Starbuck, an early bird, soon brought about a ten minutes' colloquy in the orchard.

The old Captain, later, drew Hiram aside and said, "I have the mortgage on the Hilliard place already drawn, and I will transfer it to you next week, at Hempstead, where I will give you your orders to go and buy the outfit for the *Reindeer's* long voyage! We must not be seen together, here, however!

"Some of the sailor fellows are grumbling and I've telegraphed to New York for barges, tugs and lighters to receive all the *Reindeer's* cargo! Not a word to the

women? Nothing to Roletta? I saw her driving to the train. That gal has the making of a Queen of Sheba in her! She has the Devil's own pride!"

Hiram Worth's significant nod was half a truth and half a lie.

For, even as the wily Vivien of old mastered the amorous sage Merlin, with her charms of "woven paces and of waving arms," so, the belle of Huntington drew all from her blind adorer!

"I'll drive you over to Cold Spring Station," whispered Jabez Simpson.

"I'm to be 'supercargo,' 'underwriter's inspector' and 'ship's husband' for the staunch old *Reindeer*. I will take charge at noon!

"There's a good fifteen hundred dollars' commissions in this! Starbuck is a rustler, and, no mistake!"

The family breakfast was achieved in silence, both the loving women watching the young sailor askance.

Courtship on Long Island was surrounded with austere customs, and rigid formalities, derived from the old squirearchy and the Connecticut ancestors, who stoutly held that "Praise to the face, is open disgrace!"

The two men drove away in a guarded dissimulation, each keeping his untold half of the whole scheme vested from the other!

As the smart sorrel nag dashed along in the mellow April sunshine, Hiram Worth wondered vaguely, at the veil of reserve which had so strangely wrapped the stately young Judith, of the velvet eyes.

"City ways most likely," mused the half-satisfied lover. "Roletta's a strange one, she never had any school-girl confidants, and she has learned to manage her mother! She and I only must know, and she was always so proud and shy!"

He saw at once that the plan to veil the great private "inner ring" of the *Reindeer's* next cruise demanded an abandonment of the honors of any open engagement.

All the world would, however, soon know of his good fortune, of the cancelled mortgage, and the nest egg deposit in his mother's name!

"That seemingly accounts for all my money," he observed with a secret satisfaction.

"The extra profits are hidden from all!"

He glowed with the desire to reach New York, and to inscribe his name for the Master's Examination.

To buy a five-hundred dollar diamond ring for the queen of his heart was another immediate purpose, the last five hundred loose change being ample for his pocket money and a simple outfit for the long voyage.

Soundly educated, serious and self-concentrated, Hiram Worth was not conscious of any special lack of tenderness in the flashing-eyed Roletta. He was a dabster at Love!

"They've made it up all right!" was Jabez' verdict, however, after a few veiled hints. All seemed to look well.

But, neither of these simple natures knew that coquettish womanhood always despises, at heart, the serious man!

That Jasper Coffin, with his "service ways," his florid flattery, his easy insolence of good looks, and personal display, imposed grandly upon the haughty and ambitious girl who saw all the graces of a Lauzun in her dashing secret lover!

That women have, as a rule, little love for the "good provider" class, was a truism unknown to this class of Long Island swains, who "never made" much fuss over their women!

The two men ran the gauntlet of much public rejoicing over "Hi' Worth's" forward step in life, and they separated at the railway station to meet at the old homestead, that evening, where "open house" would be kept for the whole countryside.

But half-satisfied with Roletta's guarded acceptance of the plan "to make her a fine lady," Hiram Worth departed for his busy day in Hempstead and New York!

Had he known that Jabez Simpson guided the sorrel steed to Deacon Hatch's house, he would have distrusted the sly cabal, now eager for their last combinations assembled there.

Squire Avery and Hatch remained to chuckle over the future, while Zenas Coffin, Captain Starbuck and Jabez Simpson drove away together to the Huntington Bank!

At noon, now the slave of both Coffin and Starbuck, old Jabez took formal possession of the *Reindeer*.

"I'll have her empty and towed to Greenpoint Docks in a week!" the old whaler said. "Jest leave all to me!"

Starbuck and Zenas Coffin remained closeted in the room of the Bank President while Roletta Armstrong, carrying her head high, arrived at Fort Greene Place.

The alert Delilah had already "seen the way out!"

"I can always return him the money!" she mused, "and,—it's no harm to have two beaux to one's string."

Received with open arms by her mother, who had already confided all to her "managing sister," the graceful Roletta was astounded at Zenas Coffin's golden-hearted liberality.

"Three silk dresses, and a theatre outfit, with a piano to come!" she muttered in the seclusion of her room as she prepared for a descent upon the modistes.

"I'll keep Hiram's affair to myself for a while! I can twist him around my finger. I have a week to fix it all up before I see him!"

The flowers, the bonbons, the picture of handsome debonnair Jasper Coffin in his full uniform of a Naval Lieutenant, "gun swabs," and all, thrilled her.

She twisted a nosegay of the flowers in her bosom and then came gaily singing down to luncheon, her secret plans agreeing exactly with the course mapped out by her complaisant mother.

It was a day of dupes all around, but the hearty Hiram Worth was in his best mood, that night, as he hid away the gold encircled "bit of sparkling carbon" for which he had gladly given five hundred dollars at Tifanys.

"All set," he murmured, "next week I will place it on her finger! She is the dearest girl in the world!"

Long after midnight, the old Wardour house rang with the chatter of the family guests, and, as old Jabez "spliced the main brace" for a night cap, he said, "My

boy! You are the luckiest fellow on Long Island! The tide and wind are with you! Crack on every sail that your bark of Life will carry! You are a made man!"

Thousand-tongued rumor had already done its work, in the week before the *Reindeer* was towed down through Hell Gate, and old Starbuck had duly transferred the Hilliard mortgage for Hiram's ten one-thousand-dollar bills. It was a splendid investment.

Let in on the "ground floor" of the new deal, the smaller holders being frightened out by Coffin's public announcement of "laying up the whole fleet till the *Alabama* was run to earth," old Jonas with half his forty thousand now placed in the 7.30 bonds, and the other half, in the whaling stock,—murmured over his toddy. "I'm as big a man as old Vanderbilt, in Suffolk! I've got all that I want and, I will get plenty more!"

There was but one discordant note in the general hilarity when Hiram Worth prepared to go to New York City for two weeks, on his examination, and to secretly purchase the *Reindeer's* new whaling outfit. Mary Worth and Mehitabel Wardour were startled by the notification of the officials for Hiram Worth to appear and enroll himself as subject to the last draft being enforced "to suppress the rebellion."

All the other members of the paid-off crew of the *Reindeer* had received the same, and these troubled women knew not of old Zenas Coffin's sly ruse to force the splendid crew of the *Reindeer* to sign articles on his own terms. Only as articulated mariners were they exempt.

"What will you do, Hiram?" cried the affrighted women, who knew now that Grant and Sherman's armies were mere man-eaters,—that Butler's, Sigel's, and Banks' commands were only bait for a Confederate massacre!

The land was becoming tired of having blood splashed in its face!

Our Potomac Army had never seen the spires of Richmond since the battle of Fair Oaks in '62, when

the irresolute McClellan folded his tents like the Arabs and stole away from a victorious field.

"I'll have to sign, mother," gravely said Hiram. "I will get my Master's certificate next week. I have a telegram that I passed with flying honors."

So it was, that both the women were happy to save their young sailor from the dismal grave trenches of the Wilderness.

When Jabez Simpson took the *Reindeer*, now riding high and showing half her battered copper to the dry dock, the crew of the whaler had all taken temporary billets to hasten her repair, gladly signing "provisional articles" to escape the dreaded "draft" of the helpless "food for powder."

Lee was standing sternly at bay behind the Rapidan and, the "war" was a sickening reality.

Under the secret orders of Jonas Starbuck, Worth departed to New York to purchase the entire new outfit of the *Reindeer*.

He was glad that he was not forced to meet old Zenas Coffin for, Starbuck, "for owners" and, Jabez Simpson, as "ship's husband," were now established at the Greenpoint dry dock, with old Bill Tarbox and his two colored cabin boys as "chef," and, it was a jolly mess! Night and day, the calking hammers rang merrily. So far—so good, all was peace!

New copper, sound masts, spick span new rigging, soon transformed the *Reindeer*, whose hull was found to be as solid as old "Ironsides."

The fiction of the Bermuda cruise worked well.

Still, for all his confidential employment, Hiram Worth was moody enough.

In the one long afternoon spent with the guarded Roletta at her Aunt Manning's, the lover found a curious indecision in the girl's manner. Strange suspicions haunted him.

"There's the draft before you, Hiram," sadly said the crafty beauty. "Your ship may not make its cruise at all,—unless the *Tuscarora*, *Kearsarge* or *Vanderbilt* catches the *Alabama*. I dare not say 'Yes' now! I will not take your money and, so rob you! If she does

not sail, then you may be forced into the army, or else driven to ship on some merchant vessel to escape the conscription. There's your mother—my mother. What will they think of me, the very worst, I know,—if I take your money."

"We must keep each other's secrets, dearest," eagerly cried Hiram, blind in the glamour of this dark Delilah.

"My mother does not know that I have this money at all. Your mother must not guess you have it from me. Look, if I should have to ship on a coaster or go to sea (and there are so few chances), the ten thousand dollars will, with the farm, make my mother independent for life. I will leave that mortgage with my will, in the Hempstead Bank. Take this three thousand dollars! Go on with your own plans. You say that your mother has rented her farm for three years. You can always come to your Aunt Manning's."

"If you will keep my secret, take my ring, and do as I wish. I will keep away from Brooklyn, so as to leave you free to bring your mother around. She can be led to think that they are educating you for a teacher, gratis, with a view to your future employment there.

"When we are married, it will all come out right!"

Catching at the absolute safety of her doting lover's self abnegation, Roletta Armstrong consigned the splendid diamond ring to the same hidden receptacle with Jasper Coffin's sparkling pledge, and the diamonds rested together, on her faithless bosom.

"I would not dare to wear it, publicly," she murmured.

"But, you are mine, Roletta?" cried the enraptured self-deceiver.

One glance of the splendid eyes told the whole story.

Inflamed by the lust of gold, Hiram Worth never noticed the lukewarmness of his promised wife. To guard his future secret partnership, every wily move of the demure Roletta only seemed to be dictated by a mature wisdom.

And so, while the Brooklyn mother was delighted with the young belle's easy compliance, only Mary

Worth and the hearty Mehitabel Wardour wondered at the reticence of the young couple.

"What's the use of public crying out here, mother," gravely said the stalwart sailor.

"Roletta will wait for me, and, I've either got to take a long cruise, or, else run the chance of being tossed into a Virginian ditch. We are of one mind!"

But, the sweet-faced Mary Worth was only half-satisfied when she reflected on the old-time courtship days, when she had herself wandered under the blossoming apple boughs with that prince of young sailors, Ezra Worth.

The May days were upon them before Hiram Worth (now triumphant in his master's certificate) had finished his labors in "York" as purchasing agent.

Two brief yet happy interviews with the dazzling Roletta at Aunt Manning's, persuaded Hiram on his Sunday visits, of the girl's mastery of the whole situation.

The rapid transformation of the village Cinderella into a fashionable personage, had followed Jasper Coffin's approbation of his father's liberality.

Abigail Armstrong slyly guarded from her spirited girl the secret of Jasper's open-handed liberality and the piano and gold watch as well as the dashing wardrobe were fathered upon the "liberal relative," who was now the accomplice of Roletta's mother, the crafty city sister.

"My aunt is very liberal, very kind," blushinglly said the velvet-eyed Roletta, when Hiram Worth wondered at her smart attire.

"See! I have not even touched our sacred fund," She drew out a little chamois bag suspended around her neck, and showed him the three precious bills.

It was well that Hiram Worth returned in the early days of June for his fortnight's good bye visit with the two women who loved him for himself alone.

And that the *Reindeer*, now trim as a snare drum, rocked lightly on the tide of Cold Spring Harbor, only waiting to take in her cooperage stores and fresh water with the crew.

Many rumors had reached the agitated Hiram of the meteoric rise of Roletta Armstrong in the social circles of Brooklyn, and the occasional glimpses of her in New York City, arrayed like one of "Solomon's Lilies."

"Thank God! That fellow Jasper Coffin is out of the way, for good and all," growled the giant sailor when he "took in" old Zenas Coffin's artfully spread rumors that Jasper Coffin was "in Washington," and would probably be made an Assistant Paymaster in the Navy, and sent to China or Japan on "shore duty," there, to finally restore his health.

The "Brooklyn aunt" had done yeoman's service in escorting the sly coquette "who had two beaux to her string" to many balls, dinners and theatre parties where Jasper Coffin, "by accident," met the woman who was now infatuated with the "bel air" of this young Lothario.

Busied daily on the ship, with the all-impatient Jabez Simpson, Hiram Worth aided with his sage advice, the secretive Starbuck, whose visits to Sag Harbor, Shelter Island and Montauk were frequent, in amassing the sea stores and getting the expert boatsteerers and harpooners for the future voyage.

Old Zenas Coffin, daily tasting the anticipated delights of sweet revenge, skilfully circulated the reports of Roletta Armstrong's urban conquests. It was a sort of excuse for the coming treachery.

"Her aunt is doing everything for her down there, and, she may even make a brilliant marriage."

But, loyal and stout hearted, the young sailor only smiled, with a secret triumph. "All these graces, this enhanced beauty, are all for me, alone, later," he reflected. "No one knows! It all goes on well."

To doubt her was as impossible as to fancy that *Polaris* would cut loose and go careering over the blue vault like the jewelled sword hilt of Orion.

For all the craft of Hatch, Avery, Coffin, and Starbuck, with his two dupes, it was impossible now when half of June had drifted away, to conceal the fact that the *Reindeer* was fit and ready for sea. They wished to outwit all rivals.

A week's council of war of the great whaling owners at New Bedford had taken both Coffin and Starbuck over to the mainland.

While Hiram Worth, gratified at Roletta's willingness to come up and meet him, in the blossoming meadows of Huntington, was still guarding his secrets, and none of the intriguants had betrayed themselves, a secret dispatch to the capitalist from the Navy Department told him that the worn out *Alabama* had been sighted in the mid South Atlantic, seeking a European port for refuge and repairs.

Chief of the Whaling Owner's Committee, the astute old banker rushed every detail of the *Reindeer's* equipment.

He secretly sounded the bugle call for action, when the shattered *Alabama* sank under the well-served guns of Winslow and Thornton on June the nineteenth.

In these ante-cable days, the tidings of the first of July set the whole land aflame, as Coffin sent a man to Jonas Starbuck with orders to get the *Reindeer*, at once, up to Sag Harbor for her coming departure.

Breathless with excitement, Hiram Worth learned that the sea was at last free of the Southern scourge, now lying fifteen fathoms deep under the rolling green surges of the British channel!

"Hurrah!" he cried. "The *Reindeer* will be away full three months before any of them." He well knew that nine-tenths of the idle whaling fleet was utterly dismantled.

To telegraph to Roletta Armstrong to come at once to the neutral ground of her Aunt Manning's for a final interview, was Hiram's first thought.

The words were simple. "Going to sea! Must say good bye, to-morrow. Come up, early."

One visit to the Hempstead Bank, to complete his will and to give his last orders, then, nothing was left but to send his sea chest and whole outfit on board the old whaler. On this last busy night there was no time for idle sentiment.

Captain Starbuck returning from his final conference with Coffin, drove up to the Wardour homestead

and without dismounting, cried, "Hiram! Jabez has mustered the whole crew. He will act for us here. You will take charge and bring the ship up to Sag Harbor!—

"There's an escort tug, the *Relief*, to take you through the Race. I go up to-morrow morning. Pull her out with the evening tide!"

"How about the First Officer?" anxiously said Worth.

"Joins us up there. We'll be a week, at Sag Harbor. I'll also get the two third mates, there. They are both selected. Now, Jabez can bring your mother and aunt up to say 'Good bye,' at Sag Harbor, after you turn the ship over to me. Company will stand all the expense." The lover was paralyzed.

It was an unforgotten day in Hiram Worth's stormy life.

Leaving it to Jabez Simpson to inform both his mother and aunt of the departure on a short cruise to the Bermudas, the stern sailor closed up his few personal affairs and, by daybreak, was on the *Reindeer* making his first inspection as the Commander of a vessel.

The men were all hoodwinked as to the real purposes of the voyage, and yet, all knew that "orders" would be had at Sag Harbor.

The unspeakable bliss of happy love throbbed in Worth's bosom when he kissed the folded yellow paper which bore Queen Roletta's loving lines, "Will be with you, at ten o'clock."

Leaving Jabez Simpson on board, driving past his own home to console the two weeping but happy women, Hiram Worth stole from Fate four happy hours in the Manning home with the woman who showed him at the last, a fiery passion which thrilled his very heart's core. It was Delilah's trick!

His ring gleamed upon that slender hand, her velvet eyes seemed to burn into his very soul, and Roletta's promise of a letter, every day, at Sag Harbor, made him the king of men.

"I dare not come up there," she cried. "We must

hide our secret, your noble kindness, from all the world. Remember your mother and Aunt Wardour will not know till you come back of our positive engagement."

"That is wise," fondly cried Hiram.

"Only Jabez Simpson will have our mail address which will be named in the sealed orders "to be opened in the Bermuda channel," when we take our slant for the Cape of Good Hope, so as to be the first in the Arctic."

"Our whole future depends on your secrecy, your prudence."

"What do you think of me, so far?" lightly laughed the young beauty.

Hiram's answer was a storm of kisses as he hung around her neck a golden chain, with a heart-shaped locket, with her monogram in rich brilliants. A sailor's open-handed liberality!

"My picture is there, let it lie on your heart! If you want any more money, my own darling," said Worth, as the parting time came, "Jabez Simpson, who alone knows my secret plans, will advance it. He will never talk. His last loose dollar is in this venture with Starbuck."

Moved by some undefinable impulse, the woman coiled herself around him like a snake, it was in a frenzy of love and passion, but, soon the stony-faced Aunt Manning drove away with Roletta, as Hiram cried to his driver, "Home for a last stop,—then, to the landing. Drive like the wind!"

The picture of the radiant woman, splendid in her rich dress, was burned into his brain! A superb self-deception!

A lock of hair, a photograph in a ball dress of dazzling magnificence, her murmured promises, the kisses which still burned on his lips, this was all.

"She shall queen it yet,—in the Hilliard mansion!" swore Worth, as he leaped from the carriage to whisper to his mother and the sadly shaken Mehitabel. "Remember, we will have a whole week at Sag Harbor! Come up to-morrow night, with Jabez. Company's orders!"

With his master's certificate, the splendid outfit given by Uncle Jabez, and his father's professional relics,—Hiram Worth was the happiest man in Suffolk when he gave the order at four o'clock to get the anchor up. He was in command of his first ship!—A lucky omen.

Under orders, he had dodged every good bye.

He had been lionized, catechized and made the local hero, next to the dashing Jasper Coffin, who had grown "far too big a man for little Huntington."

Cheers from five hundred villagers, waving handkerchiefs, and a salute from the one village six-pounder greeted the *Reindeer* as the *Relief* churned out of the beautiful cove, dragging the great ship, whose white wings were now all ready to drop, so as to catch the fair wind up the Sound.

"There goes the young fool!" sighed old Zenas Coffin in a happy relief, as he sat in his carriage on Lloyd's Neck and saw the *Reindeer* sweep by, riding high and showing the still burnished red copper, all as yet innocent of the "sea change" into a rusty green carbonate. The old miser scented victory!

But, Hiram Worth, walking the white quarter deck, in uncontrolled authority, was happy in his fierce and restless heart. His life's fruition lay clearly before him.

It seemed as if he had mastered nearly all the labors of Hercules and at the end of his cruise, he now saw Roletta Armstrong with open arms, that full-bosomed beauty whose head had lain upon his breast but a few hours before.

Alas! The loyal lover knew not the bitter satire of Beranger's poem, "Qu'on est bien à vingt ans."

That night, Jasper Coffin and the dark beauty sat in a cosy private box at Niblo's Garden, and it was not Hiram Worth's diamond which gleamed upon the finger of the faithless belle!

Worth recalled afterwards the vision of the departing beauty only to sigh

"What though from whom, she got her dress, I've
since,
Learned but too well;

Still in those days, I envied not a prince,
In attic cell."

So, "the stately ship swept down to its haven under the hill," and old Zenas Coffin betook himself to Brooklyn, when he had verified the fact that Jabez Simpson had escorted both the dangerous women back to Sag Harbor.

All the "North Shore" knew that there was a mystery in the departure of the *Reindeer*, whose eight lithe white whaleboats now gleamed silvery over the blue streak fencing off the Connecticut shore.

"Sealed orders with the First Officer," was the old capitalist's last telegram to Captain Jonas Starbuck as he hurried to Brooklyn to concert with Abigail Armstrong the wildest trick of his whole life. A dastardly deed!

The shuddering land was aghast with the rivers of blood deluging the dark Wilderness, where the battle now raged "with fiendish mania, in the wilds of Spottsylvania."

Eight days later, after Jabez Simpson had torn the two weeping women from Hiram Worth's arms, and the shore boat had faded away in the distance, the young officer watched alone the "blue peter" flying at the maintruck of the *Reindeer*.

The motley new crew was crowding the encumbered decks of the old whaler.

The chicken coops, men's chests, dunnage, the captain's pigs, piles of fresh vegetables, water casks and ship's stores, were a confused mass forward, where all the wild, reckless crew were gathered.

Lean "Yanks" jostled a dozen swarthy Shinnecock Indians, and bull-necked British deserters, and loose-jointed Nova Scotians, were mingled with the depleted Cold Spring Cold gang, of whom Bacchus had claimed a dozen victims for the hospital.

"And there, was 'Jake without the ears,'
And Pomba, the Malay."

The boatswain's call soon roused all hands to the

capstan bars, when a little steam launch shot out from Sag Harbor wharf.

"Get your anchor up, Mr. Worth," cried Captain Jonas Starbuck, as Second Officer Hiram Worth sprang to his duty.

He had vainly waited for *the eighth letter* from Fort Greene Place!

Seven, only, lay upon his heart as he bounded along past the foremast.

The *Relief's* hawser stiffened as the heavily laden ship slowly made her headway and Worth, catting and fishing the anchor, never turned his head till the shore boat had cast off and, far behind, the steam launch bobbed in the foamy wake of the whaler, the little cock boat of the Sag Harbor sailor boarding house, shipping the last belated drunk.

Called aft by the Captain's trumpet, Hiram Worth never lifted his head as Starbuck said, "Our new First Officer and the two third mates Hansbrough and Jessup. You three will take all the watches."

Worth raised his head as a young man in a plain suit of navy blue slowly eyed him with an air of cool disdain.

The burly form of Jonas Starbuck was vanishing in his cabin door, as Hiram Worth caught him by the arm, with a frenzied grasp. For, Jasper Coffin had taken the deck!

"What does this mean?" he hoarsely cried.

"Mr. Coffin is our principal owner," slowly said Starbuck, a little paler than his wont. "And so, he has named his son, Mr. Jasper Coffin, as First Officer, to represent his interests."

"Were you any part of this damned rascality?" fiercely said Hiram, jamming the old Captain up against the bulkhead with a detaining hand.

"So help me God! No!" hastily cried Starbuck, writhing in his grasp.

"It will make no difference with us!" he mumbled.

When Jonas Starbuck was safe in his cabin, he sought the familiar bottle, but his hand trembled like a leaf!

Stretching forward, Hiram Worth sought the seclusion of the ship's head, but he did not miss the air of cool, malignant triumph with which First Officer Jasper Coffin followed his hasty retreat.

When Bill Tarbox scuttled up and gave him the missing eighth letter, Worth drew a long breath.

"For her sake, Lady mine, God bless her! I can sail even three long years under this man. Starbuck is innocent! His face tells that. But, were he guilty, I would sink my sheath knife in his heart." Worth's heart was aflame!

"Shrill sang the tackle, sang the sail," as the *Relief* cast off her lines with three cheers, thirty miles from shore. For, Time and tide wait for no unhappy lover!

The screaming gulls were quarrelling in the foamy wake, Gardiner's Island had been left far behind, and the old ship, under full sail, stood south, past bleak Montauk, when old Bill Tarbox touched the arm of that sternly motionless figure by the foremast.

Hiram Worth was busy with the problem of Jasper Coffin's sudden appearance, and the long-expected "orders" when the burly sea cook whispered hoarsely, "It's a Friday start, and a damned bad omen. Look out for yourself, Mr. Hiram! I knew your noble father. Go in to dinner just as if nothing had happened. I'll come to you, on your watch. I can tell you news!"

"The second dog watch," said Worth.

"No one must know, but you and I, Mr. Hiram," cried Tarbox. "My sister Tabitha has been Zenas Coffin's housekeeper for years. There's worse than murder been done, and, damn my eyes, you shall know the whole truth!"

"I'm enough for him, Bill," said Hiram. "I have bested him every time before."

"His father's a stony-hearted devil from hell," said Bill. "Wait till you know all, but, I'll tell you nothing if you don't promise me to hold off your hand."

"We will see. I'll wait, I give you my word," said Worth, a dumb agony racking his heart.

"Don't let nothing fret you," pleaded Bill Tarbox,

as Worth strode aft, and then, entering his cabin, he read the letter, which seemed written in words of flame.

"Thank God. She is true! With her, I care not if the whole world's against me." His heart throbbed in a secret bliss!

Silent at the table, talking around the easy mannered Jasper Coffin, Worth sized up Mate Hansbrough, a sailor-like stranger, for Jessup, of the *Ostris*, was an old cruising acquaintance, and, he had the deck watch.

Bill Tarbox, though swaying unsteadily, served a gala dinner, with his two colored cabin boys, mumbling when he escaped, "It's a damned bad start! It will be a hell of a voyage! Who engineered this devilry? Only old Zenas! It will break the boy's heart."

And, the quarrelling sea mews screamed behind the old whaler, as she forged along, over the chopping waves.

CHAPTER V.

"PROOFS STRONG AS HOLY WRIT."

The simple etiquette of the Captain's mess kept all the wary subordinates quiet at the dinner. Hansbrough and Jessup were furtively regarding the "old man," and the new First Officer, whose attire and splendid personal outfit were those of the "sea dandy," an object of the merchant sailors' hatred. They instinctively scented trouble ahead!

Stifed in the uncongenial atmosphere, Hiram Worth gladly sought the quarter deck, at six, having the last dog watch.

He glided away the moment that Jessup entered the cabin, at six bells, the first dinner having been served at five.

Stunned by Bill Tarbox's ominous warning, Worth thanked God for the strict rules of "silence" while in charge of the ship. He was stunned by his foe's appearance.

To his dismay, Captain Starbuck and First Officer

Jasper Coffin sauntered out of the cabin and soon established themselves with their cigars in a cozy seat by the aft cabin skylight.

And so, though Bill Tarbox circled around with wistful eyes, below the poop deck, the old sea cook could find no way to reach the deck officer. It was "No Thoroughfare!"

The darkness fell softly, as Block Island and Montauk were both left behind hidden in the union of gray fog bank and deepening blue haze. A quiet brooded on the lonely sea!

Before Hansbrough relieved Worth at eight o'clock, the boatswain had forced the recalcitrant crew into a dogged submission.

"Three days to use up their whiskey, Mr. Worth, a week more to steady their nerves, and, then the crew will be all right. They will find an iron hand in Mr. Coffin! I was six months on the *Ossipee* with him. He knows no pity, and, he can take plenty of time to get even. But he's a cracking good sailor, though he is green at handling cargo, and, he does not know a 'humpback' or a 'California gray' from a ninety-foot 'bowhead!' Fine navigator, however, and as for discipline, well, you will see, you bet!"

The "new man" whistled softly.

With a few frank, sailor-like words, Hiram Worth left the poop deck, where the Captain and the millionaire's son were now huddled together in a close confab, while the good ship bowled along at a ten-knot gait!

As Worth entered the cabin, a heavy hand was laid on his arm. "Don't lose your temper with any one, my boy!" whispered Bill Tarbox.

"Starbuck is only old Coffin's dupe, Jabez Simpson, also, but, the two mates are square! Let no one see you out of humor! I'll get up on deck before daylight, and meet you, for, Jasper is watching you, like a lynx!"

A silent pressure of the hand rewarded the faithful old shipmate, who shuffled forward.

Secure in his own cabin, the startled young lover sat down and buried his head in his hands.

"I'll let them make the game!" he decided. "Bill is

right! But, if the father harms a hair of Roletta's head in my absence, if he pursues my mother, by the gods, I have the son here, and he shall pay the debt for both!"

That it was some deep game, some dangerous plot, was self-evident, for the two loving women, and the ferret-eyed old Jabez had let him leave without any warning!

He tried to recall any hint of coming trouble. There was nothing but Mehitabel Wardour's blunt comment: "Seems to me there ain't so much 'come out,' to Roletta Armstrong, as I thought! She's cold and distant enough, but her aunt's open purse, and those city gatherings, may have spoiled her."

Every one of the young beauty's letters was read over, the last, a dozen times, with no result, till Worth started, in surprise, as he noted that there was neither date nor address upon any of them, the envelopes being all unstamped, with no postmarks, and all had been delivered by the cautious Aunt Hannah Manning, save the last, handed to him by Captain Starbuck, on his return with the sealed orders.

Simply naming the day of the week, they had no date, or place of departure, and they were all signed with the simple initial "R."

It was half an hour till he saw calmly the results of Roletta deceiving her own mother, his own mystery hidden from the two sisters-in-law and even Jabez, and the half disclosures of Jabez' underhand relations with Starbuck! He was helpless!

That the three capitalists were hoodwinking the Company and scalping the stockholders, he well knew.

"It's a game of blind man's buff all round!" thought the Second Officer, and yet, Roletta has kept our secret, —from all! Her letters, sent in the mail by Jabez, will give me the whole situation! I will wait, watch, be calm, and so ignore Coffin, till I can see what Starbuck has to say!"

A sharp knock on his door recalled him. Starbuck stood there, with a steaming glass of toddy in his hand.

"Success to the voyage, my boy!" he heartily said.

"Mr. Coffin will take the deck on your day watch to-

morrow. I want to have a long talk with you, and lay out all our own private plans! No one must know but you and I! This thing is a blank surprise to me! Wait till then! Don't you fret, Hiram. We are the people, you and I!" There was no deceit in the bear-paw handshake! Worth's doubts vanished.

"What does it all mean," mused Hiram. "Here's the skipper, as right as a drum!"

He lay down, lulled by the rushing waves to sleep through uneasy dreams, while the ship danced gaily along, "lost in the night and the light of the sea!"

The cup of Tantalus was at his lips, for he wandered through Dreamland, with the beautiful woman whose softly shining eyes were as stars on the sea to the loyal lover!

Worth, unskilled in duplicity, had never realized that in his fidelity to Starbuck, in their dangerous secret compact, he had left Roletta Armstrong, before the world, free and untrammelled, save the easily explained dinner and evening which followed the trip to Brooklyn of the resolute Mehitabel.

All their other associations had been handled by stealth, as primitive savage bridegrooms of old visited the object of their affections, unknown to all the tribe! He was without defence.

His mind easily adjusted itself, however, to conditions which he himself had made, having concealed the secret trading scheme even from the clear-sighted belle!

"How could she know,—what I have told to no one! I must leave her, with free hands, to work out the innocent subterfuge of her "higher education" at the Brooklyn Seminary.

He knew in his heart of the arrangement made to innocently deceive Abigail Armstrong, and that Roletta had paid the first year's tuition, seven hundred and fifty dollars, keeping two hundred and fifty for "contingencies."

So, her lovely face hovered over his pillow that night, with no knowledge of her vanity and deceit!

"Unheralded, she came and went,
Like music, in the silent night;

Which, when the burthened air is spent
Bequeaths to Memory, its delight."

Wrapped in his pea jacket, he took the cup of coffee from Bill Tarbox's sable myrmidon, and turned up on deck, releasing Jessup, with a friendly nod at four o'clock! The nodding watch drowsed on the decks, while the man at the wheel "kept her full," and the sails sang a chorus of sweet content.

Then it was that Bill Tarbox crept behind the ship's long boat, from which safe refuge he could see every nook to starboard and port, fore and aft, and then unburdened his heavy heart to Hiram Worth. He told a story which froze the young lover's blood!

The one-eyed retainer clung to Hiram, who dragged him half way to the cabin door! There was murder in Worth's eyes.

"Are you mad? Would you be landed at the Azores in irons, to be fruit for the gallows? Your father's son! The last of the Wardours. Wait, wait! I'll stand by you, so help me God!"

With every drop of blood boiling in his veins, Hiram Worth listened as Tarbox told him that Tabitha Tarbox had heard Zenas Coffin read all the sealed orders to Starbuck, before closing them.

Hidden behind a screen, the old family servant had satisfied her curiosity and scrawled her letter to her brother Bill, which missive Starbuck had handed over to his head steward with no suspicion.

"We touch at Madeira, to take on fresh water and provisions, at Funchal! Then, to Ascension Island for fresh supplies and water, then to St. Paul's, leaving New Zealand to the west and sneaking up through the Society Islands to the Kuriles. Three more of our company's boats and eight of the New Bedford Syndicate's will follow on, in three months to the secret rendezvous in Anadyr Bay!

"In this way, Starbuck will get the cream of the catch, and, if you only watch out, you can fool them, and get proofs at Funchal. I'll help you there! Lay low, for God's sake, and have an eye to your own safety! They don't know Jasper Coffin's damned plans to

send you out on the Arctic with a boat's crew and *lose you!* That's cheap, safe murder, at second hand!"

"I can stop that game!" hoarsely murmured Hiram Worth, stunned by a revelation which had brought his castle in Spain all tumbling about his feet.

"Let me help you, Hiram!" pleaded the old cook. "Drink and women ruined my life! I knew and loved Ezra Worth and Captain Wardour. I know that old Zenas Coffin never forgave your father for fairly carrying off the sweetest woman in all Suffolk, under his rival's eyes! Now, the game is to give Starbuck or Coffin one of the other ships and to leave you alone with Jasper, under his iron rule. You are to be sacrificed!"

"But, we will not separate! I swear I'll throw a harpoon through him if he harms you! There's Hansbrough and Jessup, and both are good men!"

"And, next to his pocket, old Jonas Starbuck loves you! Keep mum! Tabitha tells me that Jabez will send all the mail (as ship's husband), on to Funchal, then to Honolulu, where the passing whalers will take it all up to Behring's Straits and the Kuriles.

"Starbuck has ordered all after Funchal to be sent up to Kussaroff, who will put it on his own schooner, the *Favorite*.

"As for the main thing, wait till we reach Funchal.

"You've got that place, Ascension, St. Paul's Island, the Polynesian group, and the Kuriles to jump the ship at! But you must conceal your feelings. Catch him on shore, if you will quarrel with Jasper! It's the father, I'll be bound, his mean revenge!"

"But, make sure at Funchal before you strike!"

"How?" fiercely muttered Hiram.

"The letter bag is the proof! I'll get hold of it for you, for old Starbuck always sends me ashore first, evidently to grab the best of the local markets! You may hear there, from Jabez, your mother, Mehitabel, or, perhaps, the girl herself!"

"But if you betray yourself on board you are a dead man!"

"This jackanapes naval martinet probably has an or-

der in his pocket, signed by the old skinflint, to take command of the *Reindeer*, should he deem it necessary. For Captain Jonas only has his new 'lay,' his tenth of the whole take.

"You see a whaler's different from a cargo ship or a passenger liner. The men, too, all adore you.

"I'll head them, if aught occurs, and don't you fear, if you keep your self-control. Remember, Tabitha only heard old Zenas and Jasper talk this over at home. She could not follow the pair to Brooklyn, and what went on there, was, of course, secret. But, Funchal will be the place for proofs. Mark what I tell you. Our 'sealed orders' are to be opened at 30° N. latitude, 60° W. longitude, just southeast of Bermuda; down to there we are to wait and take in all the Bermuda humpbacks we can, then run along 60° eastward to Funchal, unload all our take, fill up with fresh supplies, and then strike by Ascension around the Cape of Good Hope to St. Paul.

"This was got up to avoid any last rebel cruiser—and the voyage will beat all curiosity or danger. This delay of ours lets the other boats get well around and up to the Sandwich Islands, so, our whole syndicate fleet will meet at Anadyr on the Gulf. And, we will clean up the whales!

"Starbuck will have the mail for the whole fleet at the Kuriles, sent up from Hakodate by Kussaroff's chum, the Russian consul for North Japan.

"Mark, if this falls out, as I predict, you will know at Funchal that Tabitha has not lied! Go in and fool them! Jasper and his father. I'll get you proofs strong as Holy Writ at Funchal, for I'll steal his letters and steam and open and copy them. I had a good education. Whiskey brought me down to my pots and pans. Will you be patient as far as Funchal for your mother's sake, Hiram? I, too, loved her when she was a rosy-cheeked school girl." Worth nodded, with a deep groan.

Gliding away, as the new watch turned out, Bill Tarbox left the Second Officer in a whirlwind of despair.

"It must be true!" he gasped, as with his usual calmness he turned the deck over to Hansbrough in the growing light of the first day at sea.

Throwing himself dressed upon his couch, he lay in hiding like a wolf at bay, face to face with a horrible suggestion of murder.

His enemy lay across the narrow cabin there, in an unlocked stateroom. With a grim deliberation, Hiram Worth arranged his hunting belt, with its heavy knife and solid eight-inch Smith and Wesson revolver chained to the belt in Russian style.

"Ready, aye, ready," he muttered, repeating the old motto of the Wardours.

Suddenly a revulsion of feeling overcame him. He buried his head in the pillows provided by a mother's fond love, and then burst into the terrible tears of broken manhood.

Jonas Starbuck gazed blankly at young Worth when Jessup was given his orders receiving Hansbrough at eight bells.

"What's up?" said the skipper, struck by Hiram's ghastly face, as he seated himself at the dinner table. Jasper Coffin, who had exchanged no word with his junior, never lifted his eyes, but Hansbrough stared.

"Nothing!" sullenly answered Hiram, pushing back his half-finished dinner.

All the afternoon till Starbuck sent for him, the young man busied himself forward, mindful of Bill Tarbox's whispered warning, "Get your old face back, my boy. That Jasper has all his father's cunning. He will suspect our friendship!"

Something had gone out of Hiram Worth's life forever! Faith in woman's honor, hope, all the rosy dreams of the past, had fled forever. He muttered the hopeless lines of the erratic Adah Menken:

"Where is the promise of my youth,
Once written on my brow?"

"See here, Hiram," began Starbuck, when the two men were closeted in the "old man's" chart room, proof

against all spies and Jasper Coffin was tied by duty to the deck.

"What is up? All right with the girl? I know that you miss Roletta. Who wouldn't? A queen, by the great Scott, nothing like her! You made it up all right?"

He forced a glass of grog upon the sullen listener, who was trying to follow Bill Tarbox in his worldly wisdom.

In some rude fashion, Hiram disarmed the disgruntled Captain's suspicions.

"Now, if all's right with you, we will bowse on ahead! What I say to you now is Gospel truth, may God strike me dead if it isn't. I loved your father, your uncle, both old shipmates. You know what I've done for you. I want to see you on the quarter deck of your own ship. This fellow, Jasper Coffin, came down on me like a typhoon in the China seas!

"I was struck dumb when he climbed out of the launch, and with that supercilious grin of his, handed me a letter signed 'Zenas Coffin, Chairman Managing Committee Cold Spring Whaling Company.'

"The old man had me over to his house the last night. He read me a part of the sealed orders, a part only, mind you,—that I am to open in N. latitude 30°, west longitude 60°.

"To prevent any rumpus among the men, the new shipping articles for three years are then to be signed over again, by the men. Any who 'kick' are to be discharged at Funchal, where I am to get our mail and last orders, and there we can fill up our crew with a dozen Portugee whalers.

"You know they are good enough with our forty of the old *Reindeer* crew.

"So, that's all right. What Jasper Coffin has to spring on us, I don't know. Have you kept your word to me?"

"Neither Roletta, Jabez, nor my mother or aunt knows a single word of our arrangement," said Hiram, in a hollow voice.

"Jabez has told me nothing of his deal with you. You

knew your own private understanding with Zenas Coffin."

"Then, by gum, we are safe," said Starbuck, stoutly. "Kussaroff will never turn the *Favorite* over to Jasper Coffin."

"But I'm afraid that young cub has some ace hidden up his sleeve. He is a foxy devil,—his father's own son!"

"He might take this ship, and turn over one of the others to you," gravely said Hiram, "should he haul out a 'general power' up in the Arctic. We are the swiftest sailer and they will be there only in time to meet us, after we have filled up once with 'hump-backs.'"

"Give me your hand, boy," cried Starbuck. "I have him on the hip. I have my plan! Trust to me!"

"What do you mean?" ejaculated Hiram, now convinced of Jonas Starbuck's sincerity.

"Of course, I had to receive Zenas Coffin's First Officer, even if he had given me a Barbary ape, but, you must do me a favor. There's no love lost between you and Jasper?"

The old man's eyes gleamed anxiously.

"Enemies," grimly said Hiram, "ever since our first schoolboy fight. Worse to-day than twenty years ago! He's two years younger than I am."

"He's a sly snake," stoutly said Starbuck. "I see his little game. Now he was sent to me with a letter appointing him First Officer, and yet he has not yet signed the provisional articles."

"When I muster the ship's crew off the Bahamas for the three years' articles, I will not let him sign, as he is not named to this ship and, he has no compensation, or fixed lay. In his hurry to sneak him in to bully you, the old skinflint forgot that! I have no legal power to fix his pay or to settle on his 'lay,' or any proportion of the catch. I will sign, and you will, and both Hansbrough and Jessup will sign the new articles, with all our men from the old roll. Coffin shall not!"

"He will be rated as 'Acting First Officer' on his letter. If he has anything else to pull on me, he can pull

it, then! But there's no law or power to force me to rate him, at sea, to fix his pay, or to go over the mere letter of his appointment. His father must fix his pay after the cruise. So, if he wants to take a ship, it will be another than the *Reindeer*, for nothing but death can take me out of this ship.

"He does not know a whale from a meeting house, and he has never been in the Arctic. I can easily give him the slip. Now, I have spiked his guns to-day, in return for his high and mighty airs."

"How?" said the aroused Hiram.

"I have put all the boat work, all the hunting, trading and whaling under your orders," triumphantly said Starbuck, "as I have an extra officer. You are to stand no watch, and are to be relieved of all navigation and seamanship. This keeps you apart, and so he can give you no direct orders. He will take the first watch with the other two."

"How did he take it?" curiously said Worth.

"Like a lamb," growled Starbuck. "He thinks that he can follow my navigation and outwit me. He doesn't know in the foggy Arctic, the misty Behring Sea that weeks go by when we don't see a sun or star. So, he is helpless in my hands! I'll leave him in charge of the ship every time, and, you bet, the trade will all go to the *Favorite*."

"But, as to you, he said, 'That is just what my father would wish. He has told me that Worth is the best gun and harpoon man, the ablest whale fighter, the craftiest hunter, in the whole fleet. And, the ship is truly big enough for us both! A touch of the hat, is that all we need? I've no orders to give him!'"

"That looks reasonable enough," said the surprised Worth. "I owe all this to you, my good old friend."

"All right," cried the skipper, mixing another grog. "To-morrow you can turn up all hands. I'll give the orders. You will report to me, direct. Get the three watches all rated in their boat stations."

"The boatswain, quartermasters and boatswain's mate, carpenter and mate, will be under your orders as to all the whaling gear, boats and fittings. There's your

work. We'll be off the Capes of Virginia in five days. The whales are now there! When the crow's-nest lookout gives us the first signal, 'There she blows,' I want you to make a record! You have the best outfit that ever went to the Arctic, and you can fill her up once by the time we strike Funchal in early October."

"And, if he assumes any authority?" slowly said Worth.

"Be polite as a dancing master," said Starbuck. "After the new articles are signed, he is powerless. I'll handle him. For, if he wishes to leave the ship, he can! I'll never let him sign the roll, that's flat! And I am invincible, for I've got my stock safe in the Company (one-half of all my savings), and, so, with Hatch and Avery, we can checkmate old Coffin in this Company, the one which owns the *Reindeer*, though the banker got sixty per cent. stock of the eight whalers from New Bedford in this and one other thing we can curtail him.

"As for the *Favorite*, she is only my private tender, and the Russian Kussaroff will only recognize you and I. Jabez will watch old Zenas Coffin for both of us, so, if you can keep your peace, and you must, Jasper cannot ever meddle with you personally!"

"I'll give you no trouble," firmly said Hiram, when the old man took the Saturday privilege of 'Sweet-hearts and Wives' to extensively splice the hallowed mainbrace.

A week later, the last ship boy of the *Reindeer* knew of the iron hand and keen sailorship of Jasper Coffin, while the whole crew wondered at the fierce glow of Hiram Worth's sunken eyes.

"Devil take it," growled Jonas Starbuck, when they ran into a splendid school of fat humpbacks, "Hiram seems to be going to pieces, day by day. Can that 'Twisting Jane' of a pretty witch have given him the mitten? Town nonsense may have turned that pretty head, and the Armstrong and Manning women were always 'skittish cattle.'"

Silent, moody, morose, though open-handed and free-hearted with Hansbrough and Jessup, Hiram Worth

hurled himself at the boat work as if leading a forlorn hope!

Right up to within ten feet of open jaw or dangerous fluke, bombgun, sighted and trigger in hand, the desperate young leader sought some strange relief in a recklessness only tempered by his perfect skill.

His leisure was taken up with studies in his cabin, or else mooning in the evening darkness at the ship's rail with Bill Tarbox, whose evening pipe was his solace after the culinary struggles of the day. It was an armed peace, so far!

No one ever divined the object of their long conferences. No one ever noted that Hiram Worth was always heavily armed, wearing his pistol belt under his fleece wool Cardigan jacket, but all knew that he avoided the quarter deck and that the open main deck and his own cabin were his haunts. The formal touch of the hat to Jasper Coffin was Worth's only salute, and the half hour passed daily in Jonas Starbuck's cabin for orders, was the only official intercourse with the responsible commander.

Even Bill Tarbox's one eye showed him that the beautiful picture of Roletta Armstrong had disappeared from Worth's stateroom, and the sweetly smiling face which had been the "Luck of the *Reindeer*" in the long Arctic on her "great cruise" was seen no more.

"Not the same man!" growled Starbuck. "Who has made mischief between them?"

He knew of the wonderful prosperity of Hiram's finances, and sought vainly for a reason for his best officer's metamorphosis.

"Is the Seminary plan going on, Hiram?" kindly asked Starbuck, after seven great humpbacks had one-third filled up the lucky *Reindeer*!

"Right as right can be," sadly said Worth, "but many strange things can happen in three long years."

"See here, Hiram," kindly said Starbuck. "If you're mourning for the young gal, and she's lonesome, I could let you go home from Madeira. You could get married, have a season at home, and, come out next spring in the *Albatross*.

"Coffin is going to send her out with only a crew of twenty as a relief ship with three thousand tons of stores, for our eleven vessels. You could come back as first officer, and I'll hold your interest safe in this year, so, you would only lose one year's share of the catch. You'll have more money than you need, anyway! Don't fret, my boy!"

"God bless you, Starbuck," said Worth, the tears starting to his eyes.

"No, I'll not turn back for love. Nor, for money! I missed but one chance. I should have gone under the rebel fire for the flag that covers us. I would sooner have fought a gun in the *Kearsarge* when she sunk the *Alabama*, than to own all Zenas Coffin's hard won wealth. I'll be all right, by and by."

But, though the gathering in of the humpbacks continued, the whole ship set down Hiram Worth as the victim of the Friday luck.

"The man's going slowly mad," said Rawson, the ship carpenter. "He spends his nights mooning with old Bill Tarbox, and yet, he does not drink. He's going off his head."

Haggard and rawboned, Worth's fine face showed the gnawing effect of some great passion, some internal frenzied fire.

There was an unlooked-for sensation, however, when the ship was laid to in latitude 30° north, longitude 60° west, and the whole ship's company were mustered for the reading of the new articles.

"Men," said Starbuck, "we have no more rebel corsairs to fear now. I'm going to take the *Reindeer* out by the Cape of Good Hope for three years, and with the rising prices, you'll all be sure of fifteen hundred dollars a man. Any man who won't walk up and sign the new articles on the capstan head, within an hour, can be dropped at the nearest port I touch, to go home.

"But, you will only get deep sea wages to that date, and have to find your way home on the first American ship."

Three cheers rang out, as the new articles, signed by

Jonas Starbuck and Hiram Worth were led off with Hansbrough and Jessup's names.

The whole crew signed with a rush and then, as Captain Starbuck rolled up his three copies of the articles First Officer Jasper Coffin stepped down from the quarter deck, and, pen in hand, calmly held out his left hand for the rolls.

"I'll see you in my cabin, Mr. Coffin," gravely said Starbuck, striding aft, followed by the boatswain and Bill Tarbox.

For an hour, while Hansbrough held Coffin's interrupted watch, the sound of oaths and clamor came from the chartroom. *It was a battle royal!*

"They're having it hot and heavy," muttered Bill Tarbox, as he scuttled forward to where Worth was superintending the gunner and his mate loading a half dozen boxes of bombgun cartridges.

"Keep mum, let him go on and queer himself," said the cook.

To which, the hollow-eyed lover only answered by a grim nod.

That night, both Jessup and Hansbrough called Worth up to the quarter deck, which he had quitted.

"In case of a rupture between Captain Starbuck and this millionaire's hopeful, whom do you stand by?" said Jessup.

"The orders of Captain Starbuck," grimly said Hiram, touching his revolver belt. "As long as he is alive and sane—then after that,—the Captain named by the first American Consul that we reach! I follow no man's vest pocket notes of general authority to represent his rich father!"

"Right!" cried the two mates, clasping his hands in joy.

Dinner, supper, breakfast, again followed, with Jasper Coffin still locked in his cabin, when not silently standing his watch. He was sullenly defiant and silent.

Hiram Worth had gathered in and cut up two enormous humpbacks before the mates asked Worth again to the quarter deck, where Jasper Coffin sternly addressed the three: "I call you three officers to witness,"

he said, "that I demand to be entered upon the new articles as First Officer, signing the same, to participate in the cruise 'on a first officer's lay.' I have legal documents to exhibit. Captain Starbuck will only let me be entered as 'Acting First Officer,' and, he will not let me sign the articles."

There was an awkward pause.

"You, sir, next in command! What have you to say?" cried Jasper Coffin, boldly addressing the stern faced Worth.

"I recognize no superior on this ship but Captain Starbuck," coldly said Hiram, addressing his mates. "And I will transact no business with any one on this matter, unless the Captain is present, and the proceedings are entered in the ship's log."

"You damned mutineer!" yelled Coffin, but, Jessup sternly threw himself between the men.

"Come away, Worth," cried both the mates in a breath.

"Let us all go down and report this action to Captain Starbuck."

The hatred of hell shone out in Jasper Coffin's convulsed face, as the three officers descended to Starbuck's cabin.

"I leave the case with you three men," bluntly said Hiram. "Captain Jonas knows why I cannot fairly judge any matters affecting the pretensions of Jasper Coffin, but, I will support the Captain's authority with my life. That's all. You men," he said, turning to the two mates, "can tell Coffin to let me alone, on his peril! That's the end."

"Leave him to me," gravely said the justly aroused Starbuck. "I'll now read you my sealed orders and I will navigate the ship without Acting First Officer Jasper Coffin, till he fully recognizes my status as Captain."

And, thus—when in three weeks, the *Reindeer* nearly full of oil, stood over on the thirtieth parallel towards Funchal, under a blazing sun of later August,—the ex-Lieutenant had met his Waterloo.

"You can leave the *Reindeer*, Mr. Coffin, at Fun-

chal," said Jonas Starbuck, "and put yourself in command of any other one of the Cold Spring Harbor fleet, or any of the eight New Bedford associates, if they will recognize your irregular appointment, and so-called powers.

"Neither the Secretary, nor the Ship's Husband, the Council or Treasurer has given you anything to show, and you fill this First Officer's berth only as an Acting Officer, until I see your father, or the cruise is ended. I own as much of the *Reindeer* as he does, and my protest goes down on the books of the American Consul at Funchal."

So, submitting with a bad grace, Coffin watched his old enemy with the blind fury of a summer rattlesnake, ready to dart upon his enemy. But, in a brooding silence!

A perfunctory courtesy ruled at the table, and the most rigid exactitude followed Jasper Coffin's every action on the twenty days' run to Funchal.

The metamorphosis of the handsome Hiram Worth was now complete, and Starbuck was now brooding over the possibility of relieving the young Second Officer and sending him home. He feared Hiram Worth's sudden insanity.

"Don't you dream of it, Captain," boldly said Bill Tarbox. "I know the boy from childhood. He's up against some big sorrow, and he's fighting out the battle of his life all alone. It comes to us all, that way, sooner or later. But I've gained half his confidence. And I am sorry for him! Hear me, if you send him off the ship, it only means a suicide! It means, too, a broken heart for his mother, and then, the line of the Worths and Wardours is ended forever!"

"Is it the old Coffin feud, Bill?" flatly demanded the unhappy Captain.

"It may mean both murder and suicide if he stays with the ship," the sad faced Starbuck said.

"Then, let the murder come," doggedly said Bill, "if he does turn on that dandy tyrant, who has every man for his enemy,—some one will drop a block or a marlin-spike on Jasper's head before the voyage is over."

"As for any suicide on this ship, I'll look out for Hiram Worth!" cried the generous old steward.

"What is it?" roughly demanded Jonas.

"Ask me no questions, and I'll tell you no lies," bluntly replied the sea cook. "It's heartbreak to begin with, something has gone wrong, and unless he gets relief, there will be a brooding insanity. He eats like a ten-year-old child, and, his nights are sleepless. For he's dead game and he will make no sign. It's all along of your blasted Friday start and the schemes of old Shylock Coffin, your sly partner and head devil. Can't you see, Cap'n Starbuck, that Coffin only put his boy on this barkly to watch you and beat your chance of a few extra dollars?"

"Wait till I get him to the Arctic," growled Starbuck. "I'll transfer him and get an under officer from the first one of our boats that we hail in the Ochotsk, and then, make Hiram Worth First Officer."

"If he lives, God bless him," sadly said Bill Tarbox, hobbling away slowly, with a grim light in his eyes.

A wholesome awe of the wild polyglot crew and the decided attitude of the three junior officers made Jasper Coffin now submissive and secretive to all appearance. But, standing on the quarter deck, gazing at his arch enemy striding up and down the main deck, Coffin muttered: "You dog! You don't know how I have fooled you and made you the laughing stock to be of all Long Island. Wait, only wait, till I get you in the Ochotsk. I'll set you adrift, my boy, where a few hours of icy wind will dry your frozen corpse in its skin.

"Only to get my letters away secretly from Funchal, to have a formal command sent to me for the *Reindeer*, and then, to transfer old Starbuck to the *Albatross* or any other of the Syndicate fleet on my written order. You, Mr. Hiram Worth, will stay, and at a single word of mutiny, down you go, under a pistol ball! The other officers must stand by me!"

Wrestling with a haunting sorrow, more bitter than his hatred of his upstart foe, Hiram burned to see the

Pico Ruivo rise six thousand feet in air, hovering over the steep bluffs of Madeira.

"Proofs strong as Holy Writ," he said —murmured the wretched lover. "Can it be? No such a damned story of treachery ever before reached my ears. No book is filled with such an infamy. He had not dared to face the truth hinted at in the letter of Tabitha Tarbox.

"But it must be settled. I shall know soon! And then," he cried, while his eyes swam and a red mist concealed the sapphire sea. "I shall find out a way to strike, not at one, but, all of them!"

Self-controlled, brooding, and as coldly desperate as a Malay running "amuck," Worth watched his enemy in a grim silence which the watchful Jasper Coffin took for only a sullen aversion.

A school of errant whales busied every boat of the lucky *Reindeer*, as she lay on October tenth, sixty-four, fifteen miles off Funchal, with her casks nearly full and five dead whales alongside, or buoyed ready to cut up.

With an old skipper's sagacity, Jonas Starbuck promised the men a two weeks' "shore run" at Funchal, and a fifty dollar allotment on their "lay" accounts, in view of the unanimous signing of the three years' shipping articles.

So, as the *Reindeer* drifted along in the mellow moonlight, with two whales alongside and all the three furnaces lit up, the men felt that the only result of the ominous Friday start so far was the ominous quarrel between the two highest officers.

With a natural self-protective cunning, Hansbrough and Jessup chummed together.

Starbuck and Hiram Worth were now inseparable, and the haughty aristocrat, Jasper Coffin, kept to his cabin, or else strutted alone on the quarter deck.

Left severely to himself, he solaced himself with a splendid violin, an instrument of which he was a master.

His personal outfit was a most sumptuous one and had all been conveyed on board in that week at Sag Harbor, with no distinguishing mark save the letter

"C. in a diamond," as the shippers say. It was a master stroke of policy!

The crew, as well as the astute old Jonas Starbuck, at once leaped to the conclusion that mere money getting had not sent the only heir of Zenas Coffin to a possible million dollar fortune—away to face the dangers of the mystic Arctic for three long years.

Only Hiram Worth suspected any ulterior purpose, but all the men "smelled out," easily, the chances that the man who wore an eight hundred dollar blue-white diamond on his finger, used a solid silver dressing outfit, and played on a thousand dollar violin, would perhaps turn up later as the chief of the whole Cold Spring whaling squadron, as well as the syndicate fleet of eight New Bedforders.

For the general plan had all leaked out, strangely among the men, though it was only spoken of in whispers.

"He's a blasted Jonah, this dandy," cried one sailor. "Look at poor Worth, wasting away day by day."

"For all that," growled Bill Tarbox, "he's every inch a sailor."

"Aye, aye," was the reluctant growl, for, when the *Reindeer* had caught the tail of a West Indian cyclone, Jasper Coffin had led his men up to take in all sail and "laid out" on the main royal yard with them, coming down with bloody fingers, like the merest reefer.

"He's a smooth spoken, clean cut, handsome devil," said the boatswain, old Grimes, "and, you will yet see him make this ship a hell afloat! He's waiting for something! There's blood in his eye as he gazes after Hi' Worth. I understand as how Worth once gave him a proper beating when they were Academy mates over some rosebud gal."

CHAPTER VI.

BILL TARBOX ROBS THE MAIL!

When the yellow line of Funchal's lights stretched three miles along the shore, with the cross fires of the street running up the mountain, the crew forgot Jasper Coffin, now sent to Coventry, by high and low, in dreaming of Dolores, Inez, Panchita and all the lissome Portuguese girls waiting, velvet-eyed, for them in the "tiendas" and wine shops of the one city of thirty thousand on the island of Madeira.

Bill Tarbox glumly watched two figures on the foks'al platform, as the ship stood along easily, with just enough sail to give an easy steerage way, for the half of the crew on duty were rolling and stripping the two whales lashed alongside. Jonas Starbuck was crafty in softly calling Worth away from the cabin and quarter deck.

"My boy," he said gravely, "I have to take a grave responsibility here. I know enough of your quarrel with Jasper Coffin not to let you two men ever set foot on shore at the same time while I am master of the *Reindeer*. I see, now, how old Coffin sneaked Jasper's princely outfit on board, and, but for a clear omission to ship him legally on shore as First Officer of the *Reindeer*, I would be in the old man's power. He is using this handsome young dog as a spy on me. The old skinflint doesn't care a rap if you were to hang. Money, money, is what he wants.

"Now Jasper, in his blind rage, has gone so far as to also approach all the petty officers.

"Boatswain, carpenter and all, and he will try to bribe or bully them into supporting him, in an attempt to take charge of this ship at Funchal.

"He has some 'general power' of his father, alone, which, however, cannot affect a ship filled with men who are sailing on the regular 'whaler's lay' agreement.

"But I will outwit him! I will not let him go ashore at Funchal. If he does, I will force him to desert the

ship, and he will not dare to do that. He will not have the support of the other two captains of our Cold Spring boats, nor any of the New Bedford fellows.

"Now, we have five whales buoyed here within three miles, and have to keep two boats out watching them. It will take a whole week to cut them up and try out. I will send you ashore to-morrow in a whale boat with Jessup, who knows the American Consul well. The Consul is the ship chandler's agent, and also our correspondent here.

"Bill Tarbox will go with you and buy up all the fresh stores we need. Jessup will engage a water boat and stevedores to bring out barges and to take off our oil. There is coo-perage to be had, and you will get all my private mail, the ship mail and then send it off to me by Bill Tarbox.

"When the water and supplies are ready, I'll stand in to the outer roadstead, and under pretense of keeping the men from deserting, only send one watch on shore at a time.

"I will have the Consul come off in his sailboat, then I and the other two officers will make our protest as to Jasper Coffin.

"I'll make all the petty officers do the same.

"Then, if he kicks, the Consul will take Mr. Jasper out of the ship. By Heavens! I'll show Mr. Jasper Coffin who runs the old *Reindeer*!

"I'll not go on shore myself, and so, I'll keep him here in charge of the ship under my eye. That will give him no chance to send 'home letters' to the old man without my knowing what's in them.

"When all is done, I'll call him in, and give him his written orders before the Consul. He went too far when he stirred up mutiny among my petty officers.

"Now, Hiram," kindly concluded Starbuck, "you look fagged out. Stay on shore a couple of days. See a doctor. Limber yourself up a little, and, if you get a fist-full of love letters from Roletta Armstrong, you'll soon be another man. I told Jabez Simpson to go down to Brooklyn and tell her to write to you at Funchal, also to Honolulu and Nagasaki, to the care of the Russian

Consuls there. Anything marked '*Reindeer*,' Kussaroff, will get to us by the *Favorite*. You see I keep you out of all this quarrel of yours with Coffin.

"When we are home again, you can give your evidence then, but it will not be needed. I'll mash him flatter than a flounder!

"I'm too old a bird for the whole Coffin family. Tried to undercut me, that's all. He'll be a d—d fine violinist when I get done with him.

"Plenty of lonely leisure to practice. It was a coward trick of old Zenas. But it has failed. He overloaded the gun. I'll hold this ship with my life!"

After Worth muttered his thanks, Starbuck said, "Mum's the word. Jessup will rouse you at daybreak. Old Bill Tarbox knows the town, full of awful pretty Portuguese gals, too. You are just to know nothing. Say not a word to the young Consul. Bill has my private letter for him. Here's twenty doubloons in gold. I'll note them on your account. For, 'greenbacks' don't go here."

Worth accepted the money, though he had five one hundred dollar bills at his belt, a last present from Uncle Jabez Simpson, who fancied that Worth had nobly given up his all for the mortgage, his mother's friend and his own outfit.

The thrifty old fellow did not know of the ten thousand dollar mortgage destined to bring the Hilliard place into the hands of the young whaler by Bob Hilliard's reckless improvidence.

The Second Officer moodily sought his cabin after pressing the brave old schemer's hands in silence.

"Rough diamond, but a good friend," mused Hiram, as he vainly tried to sleep, fearing the tidings which might be awaiting him at the straggling seaside town.

There was Tabitha's unfinished disclosure, a story of treachery, sorrow and shame to be verified, as Bill said by "proofs strong as Holy Writ."

Jasper Coffin was sleeping heavily after his early morning watch, when Worth tumbled out, and in a plain blue suit covered with a boatswain's great-coat, put on his belt with his money, knife and revolver, and

then filling a pocket with cigars, drank his coffee and slipped down into the waiting boat.

The morning mist made the ship invisible a few boat lengths off as she went about, standing off and on by her buoyed whales, floating lazily on the four mile current setting along the shore to the south.

Jessup, in command of the boat, nodded to his men and, with a leg of mutton sail raised,—the lithe whale boat scudded on to Funchal, just as the rising sun showed the old tile-roofed cathedral, the scattered churches, the white walled convents and the four strong forts grinning over the open roadway, to whose rocky and uneven bottom the anchors of fifty vessels were clinging.

Only the English, Spanish, French and Portuguese flags were to be seen!—Not a single banner of the Red, White and Blue among them all! Few words were exchanged as the vineyards on the hill became clear to the sight, the fishing boats spread their white sails, and the wooded slopes of Madeira towered over them.

Wild and grand, its sides quaintly crimped into steep bluffs, the garden island dreamily lay on its sapphire sea zone, three hundred square miles of Paradise, where the tropics and the temperate zone meet in the plantations, rich with every lavish gift of Nature.

A crowd of lazy blacks, motley soldiers, beach combers, and black Venuses met the boat, all eager to prey on "Sailor Jack," but Bill Tarbox meaningly grasped Hiram Worth's hand.

He whispered, "Let Jessup go and wake up the Consul. Stay with me!"

Privately warned by Captain Starbuck, Worth let Jessup go away to his carefully laid out duty, while Bill Tarbox hid Hiram Worth in a rear room at "Portuguese Ann's" where two or three wistful-eyed beauties clad in white robes, and carelessly smoking papelitos, bent their Madonna like eyes upon the handsome young sailor, while Bill Tarbox scuttled away with a few words of warning.

"You'll have a good breakfast while I go over and get all the letters. Ann will look out for you. Speak

to no European! I'll have letters from Tabitha here, sure as shootin.' Don't mind these poor gals. From Inez to Paula, they're only Nature's children, and a bottle of vino maduro will soon get you rid of the whole crowd!"

In an hour, Hiram Worth had listlessly despatched his breakfast, while he waited breathlessly for the return of the old confidential henchman of the adroit Starbuck.

At last, there was a heavy footfall on the tiled floor of the hall, and Bill stumped in, carrying a heavy mail bag.

"Anything for me?" cried the excited man, as Bill handed out three letters.

Worth was shaking like a leaf!

"I've had but one look," Tarbox said. "I'll go over them again! The boat's going off at noon, and I've got some secret work to do here for the Captain."

He disappeared in a back room, where Portuguese Ann had herself prepared a steaming tea kettle for the steward and a table suitable for his sly operations.

"Poor fellow. Hit hard. God help him. I'm afeared to read Tabitha's letter. But, first to business!" muttered Bill.

He left Hiram Worth gazing at the three formally addressed letters which represented his delicate and loyal mother, his sturdy and prosperous Aunt Mehitabel and the business-like blue dispatch of Uncle Jabez Simpson. "Not a line,—nothing from Roletta," he groaned, as he tore open his uncle's letter.

It was an acute dissertation upon the affairs of the Cold Spring Whaling Company.

As usual, the postscript contained the most valuable information.

"Went down to Brooklyn and saw Roletta. Gave her your Funchal address and she promised to write. Fine gal that; her aunt is a wonder, she sends Roletta every day to the Brooklyn Seminary in a carriage. Holds her head high and was dressed like a queen. Don't seem to get on with Ma' Worth, and our old Mehitabel much. Never come nigh 'em since you've

left, but, she comes up to old man Coffin's once a week, for he's leased the Armstrong farm for three years and he's managing their home place. Had it all full of summer boarders! I wonder if old Coffin's got a mortgage on the Armstrong place. It lies right next to one of his best farms, and the two hundred and fifty acres of the Armstrong place would give him wheat land and meadows for a six-hundred-acre farm. Roletta's no soft-hearted chicken, but if ye will have a bird of Paradise, ye must pay the price. She looks purty as an angel! But, our two women are right sore about her conduct. Never come nigh our house sence you sailed. T'ain't right!"

"She *does* keep our secret with a vengeance," growled Hiram, as he opened the letters of the two women and read that tender mixture of trivial detail, womanly emotion and far away tenderness, which makes up a home letter.

There were one or two caustic comments in Mehitabel Wardour's communication which stung him to the quick.

"I guess you're the hoss and she's the rider, Hiram," wrote the stern-featured old widow. "She ain't treating your Ma' half decent, and there's as good fish in the sea as ever was caught. Don't forget, my boy, there's some awful pretty girls growin' up on Long Island now."

The paper rustled down to the floor and old Bill Tarbox stood before him. There was a dignity in the old steward's face which Worth had never seen.

"Ann, he cried, "fetch me a bottle of that stuff you keep for the Bishop. Remember, the 1850."

When the golden brown wine was mantling the thin Venetian glasses, Tarbox said gravely: "My boy, it's nigh on to ten o'clock. The boat leaves at noon! Jes-sup's a strict man and a firm disciplinarian. I've got a dirty job from the Captain and I've done it with Ann's help. But you must promise me now if I tell you all, like a man, you'll not be onreasonable, and you'll let me help you. But I'd be a dirty dog if I let you go any farther and be hoodwinked!"

"What do you mean?" cried Worth, who had swallowed his beaker of that old Madeira which is now only a golden memory, unattainable, even by kings.

"There's five letters," solemnly said Bill Tarbox, spreading them out on the table.

"You know the hand that wrote them?" the old cook sadly said.

Worth was on his feet in an instant, but the one-eyed sea cook had grappled him.

"Hold off, my poor boy, she ain't worth murder for her trifling sake. Let me talk."

There lay five letters addressed to "Captain Jasper Coffin, ship *Reindeer*," in a woman's hand which Worth but too well knew.

"Listen," cried Tarbox, as he forced him back. "The skipper give me orders to steam and open all Jasper's letters to find out what sort of a job the old miser was puttin' up in the whole outfit of the *Reindeer*."

"I've done the job neat! I've got one of them there German outfits for that work. So help me God, I didn't know what I'd find. Remember my place. I'm an old man! Life is as sweet to me as to you! But, every one of them five letters from Roletta Armstrong to that damned snake begins: "*My Darling Husband!*"

There was a crash, and Hiram Worth lay as one dead before the affrighted human castaway!

A half an hour later, "Portuguese Ann" and her wistful-eyed women had brought the young whaler 'round.

He lay as one devoid of all life till Tarbox poured a great draught of Pelvoisin cognac through his pale lips.

With a feeble motion of the hand, Worth sent the timorous women flying away to hide.

"Tell me all, Bill," he gasped. "Did you read all the letters?"

"I did. I had to," faltered Tarbox. "Ship's affairs ain't nothing to you to know, now. I got all I wanted, and more, like listeners. I will not let you read these letters, Hiram, but I swear to God, I'll steal some of them outright and keep them for you for proof. You

shan't see them till I come back to you. That's my final judgment! She's a damned Jezebel,—that vain girl! That's what. An' poor child, fatherless, with a mean and crafty mother, they just have caught her on the weakest side—pleasure, money, vanity, rattletraps, and society nonsense."

"Horrible. Horrible!" groaned Worth. "Bill, is it true, no mistake?"

"Listen!" said the old man, bringing out a horn-bowed pair of Chinese spectacles.

"Here's what Tabitha says:"

He read an eight-page letter, confirming the suspicions of the visit of Mrs. Armstrong, Aunt Manning and the modern Delilah to the Coffin mansion on the evening when the *Reindeer* was towed out of Cold Spring Harbor.

That Jasper Coffin and Roletta Armstrong had been *secretly married* at Brooklyn on the next morning, that a week's honeymoon had been passed at Fort Greene Place, and that Jasper Coffin had taken a through train to Montauk, leaving his wife's arms, was true, as well as the unbounded generosity of Zenas Coffin to the beauty who was now being "polished" to rule in the Coffin mansion at Huntington.

It was old Tabitha who had taken the silks, laces and diamonds of the Coffin family down to Brooklyn, and turned them over to the two sisters, who gloated over Roletta's altered mind, as she rode in her own carriage, which took her daily to the "polishing process" of the Seminary.

"Once a week, the old man goes down to Brooklyn and there is a great dinner, the women all have the best box at the theatres, and the old man sits back in the shadows, while Roletta, like a queen, takes the place that her deviltry has won for her.

"I'm old, William, helpless, and poor," wrote the poor housekeeper, "but, the hand of God is hangin' over these heartless people. There's Hiram Worth——"

"Stop," cried the young whaler, "not another word." He leaped from the couch and poured out a huge

draught of brandy. There was a devilish glitter in his eyes.

"Get off to the ship, Bill. You're a good man. I want to think this thing all over, alone."

The poor old degraded cook was on his knees beside Worth in a moment.

"Hiram," he said with streaming eyes. "Let me have my way. Give me your knife and pistol! I'll leave you your money belt. Old Ann will take good care of you. Let me go off to the ship. Keep all this dark. So help me God, I'll stand by a shipmate, to the death. Let me handle old Starbuck. I'll leave the letters with Ann to keep. Choose any three you want. But, let her keep them, till I see you. That's the proof, 'stronger than Holy Writ!' I'll come back to you. I'll also give you Tabitha's letter. But, swear to me that you'll not come to the ship till you see old Starbuck and that you'll stay here, till I see you again."

"What's your game?" growled Worth.

"I won't have the whole ship's company grinning over this. You don't want this cur Coffin to get at your game?" said Tarbox.

The young whaler sprang up as tense as a Pawnee brave on the war path.

"No, by God! He never shall know my game. Go ahead, Bill! Honor bright. I'll do as you wish. I swear it! For my whole life now is a play to get even on them both. If I killed this damned snake here, it would be only child's play. There's the old man. Zenas, the head devil! I must think. Go on, Bill! I'm your man."

Worth buried his head in his hands as "Portuguese Ann" and Tarbox conversed in a low tone in the doorway.

Bill was gone soon and a letter was hidden away in Ann's capacious bosom.

Suddenly the young son of Anak started up. The swarthy old woman stood at his side, gazing down upon him with an infinite pity.

Unaccustomed to drink, the fiery liquor was coursing through Hiram's veins. But, the devil in his nature

was loosed at last! The tiger had torn away the bars of his cage.

"Wine," he cried. "Champagne, and, let all the young ladies bring their guitars. Dolores, you said, sings like an angel. Let her come and *sing to me!*"

Slowly shaking her head, the poor old wine-shop keeper scuttled away.

"It may save him," she muttered to herself. "Save him from killing some one else, or perhaps, himself! Poor boy!"

But she never heard the bitter ejaculation of the stalwart Second Officer:

"There is only one kind of women after all! And, these, too, have bright eyes! These, too, have swelling bosoms and, soft low speech."

Far out in the horizon the thick black smoke of the *Reindeer's* try-kettles marked her drifting path, as the reckless Hiram Worth revelled and the wistful-eyed Portuguese girls wondered at the "mad Americano."

But, in the cabin of the *Reindeer*, old Jonas Starbuck, in a long secret conference with Bill Tarbox, had soon fathomed every wile of his traitorous First Officer and the projected scoundrelism of the old usurer, who was secretly gloating now over his theft of the belle of Huntington to please his only son.

"Is it the money or Jasper, that this proud girl really fancies?" mused Zenas Coffin, in far away Huntington on this October night, while Jasper Coffin, eager and unsuspecting, not dreaming of Starbuck's artifices, moodily walked the deck of the *Reindeer*.

"Both!" finally decided the old banker as he wondered at the easy assumption of the once humble village belle, who was fast drifting into all the elegancies of an urban star.

But Jasper Coffin, still thrilling with the memories of his possession of the woman who had broken Hiram Worth's heart, paced the quarter deck of the *Reindeer* still unsatisfied.

"Half my triumph is to see him wretched, to see him go to the gutter, an outcast, and to see the dogs drive him away from my door."

"How about Hiram?" asked Starbuck that night, as Tarbox made him his evening nightcap.

"Left him goin' a bit by, and large," carelessly said the steward. "Young men will be young men, you know!"

"I hope he'll have a good run for his money, and knock all the sentimental nonsense out of him," growled the Captain.

"He's in good hands," quietly said Bill, smiling. "I know the old burg well."

"Let him have his run, Bill," said Starbuck. "Keep an eye out! While he's away, it's another excuse for me to avoid letting Jasper go ashore until the Consul has given him a rake down."

"You see from the old man's letter, that he expected Jasper to take command of the combined fleet, at Honolulu. You did your work well. I'll frighten him, here. Stand around to Ascencion and St. Paul, take on water and fresh supplies at some one of the Society Islands, and then, make a slant for Hakodate and the Kuriles. I will fool them all."

"So, Mr. Sea Lawyer won't get his papers till we get to the Arctic. And I'll just quietly burn up any letter from the old man, for, the Honolulu mail will be all sent off to Kussaroff at the Kuriles."

"Watch over Hiram, he's the apple of my eye! When we strike the Arctic, Jasper Coffin can go on any one of the other ten whalers. He'll never get the old man's full signed legal orders, from the whole navigating committee and the managers, till he sees the copy in the letter book, at home!"

"Here!" he handed Bill a hundred-dollar bill. "You did your work amazing well. Jasper never noticed the opened envelopes. I saw him tear them open, on the quarter deck, and then chuck all the envelopes overboard. When we pick up the two last whales to-morrow, I'll send you back into Funchal, and you can then stay there till we drop anchor in the outer roadstead. You need your own frolic. Where is Hiram?"

"I left him at Portuguese Ann's," demurely said the sea cook.

"Worse places than Ann's in the world," grinned old Starbuck, as he turned in.

But two days later, Bill Tarbox was sorely puzzled.

He had watched the British steamer *Laurel*, of Liverpool, laden to the water edge, sweep by the busy whaler, and go swiftly steaming up to the inner roadstead with a long train of signal flags flying.

"Decks all awash," growled Bill. "Loaded to the gunwales. Looks like a blockade runner," the steward soliloquized as he sauntered into "Ann's" hostelry.

A burly heavy set Briton in the uniform of the Naval Reserve, was sitting in familiar converse with Inez and Panchita, over a bottle of the best, and, Tarbox noted the gunner's golden chevrons on the man's arms, as "Ann," with a whitened face, drew him aside.

"Madre de Dios, amigo mio," she whispered. "Dolores and your young giant went away, yesterday! They are both in hiding. The man owes me for three bottles of champagne, and the girl stole the letters from my bosom as I slept."

Bill Tarbox caught her by the arm, and threw a golden doubloon on the table.

"Find them for me before nightfall," he sharply said. "Take the wine out of that! Never mind the change! If you don't, I'll see the Consul and the Commandant!"

A half an hour later, sitting with the gay Inez on his knee, Bill Tarbox was joining in the chorus of "Britannia rules the waves," while Gunner Hugh Allerton was teaching the coy Panchita the refinements of Liverpool dock English, in the intervals of lowering the level of his glass and celebrating vociferously the naval supremacy of the dreaded Union Jack.

The shades of evening were falling as the robust form of "Ann" darkened the doorway.

"I have found them, Senhor," whispered the frightened woman, interrupting a lecture of Gunner Hugh Allerton, upon "Loveliness, Lush and Loot!"

At this calm sunset hour, when the Angelus was sounding from the many temples of the Most High, the *Reindeer* majestically glided into the outer roadstead.

After the anchors rattled down, and the swarming

watches were furling the sails, First Officer Jasper Coffin touched his hat as Captain Starbuck approved the handsome way in which he had put out his ground tackle.

"I would like to go on shore, sir, as soon as convenient. I have private business of importance."

"I shall have to keep you on the ship, sir, for a time," coldly said Starbuck. "I must leave you with a hundred-thousand-dollar cargo and a two-hundred-thousand-dollar ship. You are my next in command. I can only trust to you!"

"At your service," stiffly replied Jasper Coffin, while Hiram Worth, alone with the lustrous-eyed Dolores, read Tabitha Tarbox's letter, and then, tore open the letters of Roletta Coffin to her absent bridegroom.

"Proofs strong as Holy Writ," he groaned. "This means perhaps death to both of us!"

CHAPTER VII.

GUNNER ALLERTON CAPTURES A PRIZE.

When Jonas Starbuck's gig left the side of the *Reindeer*, the stern old Captain had called Officers Coffin, Hansbrough and Jessup to the quarter-deck.

"Gentlemen," he said, "there has been some friction here as to an alleged authority given to one of my officers by a capitalist on shore, whose power only extends to the stock of the Cold Spring Whaling Company, when duly voted, at a legal meeting! I now go to the shore to bring the United States Consul off to investigate this matter. I am, by maritime law, the absolute commander of the *Reindeer*."

"Save to King Death, or, the god of storms, I will never give her up till I cast anchor again in the harbor that we left! I now forbid any communication with the shore, any officer or man leaving, and the reception or transmission of any letter or message."

"The quartermasters are all armed and they have my written orders!

"After the Consul's visit, I shall act as he may prescribe in the best interests of all, and, according to law. I have also had a private report, by a fishing vessel, of matters which will make me hasten away from Funchal, and also considerably vary my course.

"What these matters are will be learned by you, at sea!

"I have left the mail-bag open in my cabin! Write all home letters now! Let the men know this!"

This edict was received in a grim silence, all three touching their hats, and with Coffin's curses, not loud but deep, following the departing shipmaster.

Two hours later, Jonas Starbuck and the Consul were deep in consultation, at the Consular residence, while Bill Tarbox, guided by "Portuguese Ann," had made a friendly descent upon the half-sobered Hiram Worth!

"See here, my boy!" stoutly said the old steward, "I've a secret mission from the Captain to perform! You must let me hide away, with you, for Starbuck expects some hidden treachery from his golden-haired young would-be mutineer."

"The Consul goes aboard to-morrow, the old man will have the ship then towed down to Très Palmas Bay, and a marine guard set over her there, until Consul Barlow has made his findings.

"All the water, stores and supplies will be sent there on the four lighter barges which will take off our oil! And, my work must be done in secret!"

The fierce-eyed Second Officer growled, "Will that hound Coffin come ashore?"

"No! thank God!" stoutly said the cook, who had sunk from Second Officer to king of the ship's galley, years before, by the levelling power of whiskey. "He is playing to get his private letters mailed to old Zenas, and Starbuck has set me on to prevent it!"

"'Ann' has sent off a bum-boat of delicacies, and her own cook to 'jolly' the men, till I return!"

"Later, she will send her 'colony' down to Très Palmas bay and the men can have their shore leave and

good spree, there, inside the lines of a company of guardiacostas."

"How will you get to Jasper Coffin's secrets?" anxiously said Worth.

Bill Tarbox shook a heavy purse of doubloons! "I'll get copies of all his letters to old Zenas! This goes to the postmaster here! The Consul and 'Ann' have already fixed it! Consul Barlow gets ten per cent. on all that goes in and out of the ship, besides a two-hundred-dollar fee, on 'ship account,' for the official investigation."

"Bill! I want copies of all his letters—to,—to her!" said Worth, as he burst into a flood of tears, causing the timid Dolores to tap her forehead and whimper "Mucho borracho!"

"I'll do it!" said Bill, "if you'll only knock off the drink! Let Dolores give you what will do you good,—no more! Ann will watch over you!"

"Be a man! See here! You want to hit 'em all up! This empty-headed girl, the old wolf, and the young cub!"

"I do—all three!" growled Worth, seeing the wisdom of Bill's rough logic.

"Then wait! Give no one the tip of your trouble! You're to stay here in hiding, till the Consular Court has done up Jasper Coffin! Jonas will come and see you!"

"Will you give me your word not to lift a hand against Coffin, till after we round the Cape of Good Hope? By that time, you'll be cool! Our voyage will then be safe! Jonas might be tried for murder, as an accomplice, if aught happened here! Lay for Jasper, like a tiger! He's laying for you, all right!"

"But, let us hoodwink him now, here! Once at the Kuriles, or up in the Arctic, if anything happens, there'll be no witnesses! I can fix that!"

"Old Starbuck will stand by you, if you only keep a shut mouth! There's other rosebuds blooming on Long Island awaiting you!"

"You'll be made rich by this cruise! Here's Dolores to your hand! A beauty! Docile as a gazelle! Make

the best of it, and wait to hit the brute when he's off his guard! He does not suspect you, as yet! Is it a go? But don't drink yourself mad!"

"Bill! You have my oath!" said Worth, his face hardening. "You've showed me the way!"

"Then you'll only let Ann and Dolores take care of you?" said Tarbox.

"I will!" swore Worth.

"You'll have all you want then! Let's go over and have dinner upstairs with this jolly Britisher, Allerton! He owns Inez for the stay of the *Laurel*, and, with the guitars and the girls, you'll soon forget that Long Island girl with a heart like a hollow filbert!"

"But, I'll pay off my debt!" fiercely shouted Worth.

"Now, there, you talk like a man!" cried Bill, ordering a bottle of "fizz."

"Never forget, and, never forgive!"

And that night, they all made merry, while the artful Ann closed her house, for, Allerton the Britisher, and Tarbox were both laden with gold.

Señhor Dominguez, the "Jefe de Correos," was hugely delighted with Panchita's dancing, and he arranged, "inter pocula," with Tarbox for an inspection of all the letters directed to America which should find their way, by hook or crook, to the dingy old postoffice.

Thus it was that Jasper Coffin was foiled when he tossed a doubloon to a boat from the steamer *Laurel*, which came to borrow some tobacco, while they lay in three days' quarantine, coming ostensibly from Bahia, Brazil.

His letter to "Zenas Coffin, Esq., Huntington, Long Island, New York," fell into Bill Tarbox's hands, before the next noon.

And, also, a lengthy missive addressed to "Miss Rolletta Armstrong, 107 Fort Greene Place, Brooklyn, New York."

The victorious Jonas Starbuck had got back on his ship at midnight,—after a few words with Bill Tarbox in "Portuguese Ann's" humble boudoir.

"So, Hiram's set all his stun'sails, has he! Give the boy a good frolic! The gals and the good stuff here

will take the megrims out of him! I'll see him in two days! I want him off the ship till the Court's over!"

And so, the next day, while Bill Tarbox hastened the supplies off to Très Palmas Bay, Hiram Worth struck up an amazing friendship with Hugh Allerton, who was as free of his gold as of the caresses which he lavished upon the dashing dark-eyed Inez,—an island Venus with no code but pleasure,—and no end to the roll of her vicarious lovers.

By noon, Jonas Starbuck's brow darkened as he read the copied letters of Jasper Coffin, sent on board by "Portuguese Ann's" brother, a dark-eyed corsair, whose red sash and navaja proclaimed him "le coq du village!"

Grave and sly, Starbuck called the astonished First Officer before the Consular Court, where his Captain's secret agent coldly conducted an investigation into the extra-legal efforts of Coffin to force himself on the roll as the articulated First Officer of the whaler, entitled to the customary lay.

Ignorant of the real cause of Hiram Worth's burning mental fever, Starbuck gravely observed: "I have decided not to call my Second Officer, Hiram Worth, as a witness, for, he is not only sick on shore from his over zeal in filling this ship with oil, but, there is a prejudice which might invalidate his testimony.

"Mr. Coffin, forced on me by a nomination delivered after one anchor was up at Sag Harbor, has not seen fit to say even 'Good morning' to his junior.

"Some trifling boyish quarrel, some old school-boy feud, is no reason to tantalize and ignore the best whaler who ever left Long Island!

"Mr. Coffin has never struck a whale and does not know a blackfish from a grampus. I'll say right out, however, that he's as good a sailor, as clean a navigator as ever walked a deck, and, as brave a man as ever struck the maintruck,—but, I'll have no back-hauling, no under cutting, on my ship! He either stays or goes! If he stays, he treats Worth like a man!

"If he goes, he shall not set foot on the shore, till Worth is back on this ship!

"And, right here, I say I'll not have those two men on the island *at the same time!* I see my duty to keep Mr. Coffin here, and he shall not turn my ship upside down! I mean it, so help me God!"

A powerful steam tug was already dragging the *Reindeer* along to the distant Très Palmas Bay.

She passed within two calls lengths of the overloaded steamer *Laurel*, whose signal flags were still flying, and no one was permitted to board the ship suspected of "yellow jack" infection.

Jasper Coffin, silent and gloomy, had retained the Vice Consul to act as his private counsel, on the Captain's formal notification, and, at bay, he closely watched the clerk's scratching pens.

"I can take Second Officer Worth's evidence ashore on 'settled interrogatives,'" calmly said the Consul, "then, I will furnish Mr. Coffin a copy of the evidence, under seal!

"I can clearly see that this matter will have to be settled at the home port by the United States District Court for the Southern District of New York."

Then the crafty Jasper Coffin suddenly rose and addressed the Consul.

"I will submit to the Consular jurisdiction," he said. "I desire to avoid crippling the Cold Spring Whaling Company. I also wish to continue the voyage on this particular ship. I only showed Captain Starbuck my general power from the appointing authority.

"As for Mr. Worth,—his duties keep him out of my daily intercourse, and the ship's wide enough for us both! He's a most capable officer in his assignment,—should it be changed,—then,—I'll treat him just as well as I do the other mates!"

"Let us get our rights legally defined!" gravely said Jonas Starbuck. "I've been forty years at sea, and this is my first Consular Court! I'll do even justice by all, but no man shall run my ship, not while I am the master!"

In the interval of the sumptuous luncheon, Jonas Starbuck grinned, as he read Bill Tarbox's copy of the subtle letter of Coffin to his father.

"Just as well! It goes into 'Ann's kitchen fire!' mused Starbuck.

"Of course, he will be smart enough to post several harmless family letters in the cabin bag. He is a sly dog!"

By the return of darkness, when the tug *Dom Pedro* was ready to return to Funchal, and the *Reindeer* was securely anchored, far away from Funchal's giddy cohorts of Bacchus and Venus, the grave-faced Consul had closed the testimony of the four leaders and the petty officers, who sullenly "gave Coffin away," in a straightforward sailorly fashion.

"This case is so important, gentlemen," said Barlow, when Coffin had been cross-examined to a finish in his vain attempt at defense, "that I shall have to return and look up the authorities.

"In the meantime, any one leaving the ship by craft will be a positive deserter, and it will forfeit all rights of the offender! Any forcible attempt so to do would be mutiny! I would take any man off the ship and degrade any officer who defies the wholesome prudence of Captain Starbuck.

"I only know him! I have all the ship's papers and they are in due form! Mr. Coffin is not legally articulated! If he leaves the ship, he forfeits every right, of every kind! But, he is free to do so! He was not legally shipped."

Gravely bowing, the Consul said, "I will bring my subordinates as witnesses in three days, and then announce my decision, giving copies, under seal, to the Commander and to each officer for his guidance.

"I shall take Mr. Worth's evidence on shore to-morrow, as Mr. Coffin has courteously waived a cross-examination, but, he will have a sealed copy of that sick officer's evidence.

"I counsel a spirit of proper submission, as well as of faultless seamanship! First Officer Coffin is a superb sailor!"

Churning away, in the phosphorescent sea foam, the *Dom Pedro* bore the complaisant Consul away, leaving Starbuck and his younger officers at supper, while the

strains of Coffin's violin defiantly resounded from his cabin, after he had discussed his separate meal and enjoyed an excellent Havana.

"By Jove!" mused Coffin. "That doubloon was well spent! Both my father and Roletta will get the letters safely which I smuggled off by the *Laurel's* boat!

"Then, old Starbuck will find orders at Honolulu which will just paralyze him! I have them, now!

"I'll have the Executive Committee, the ship's husband, and the President and Treasurer, all give me the command of the *Reindeer*, and detach old Captain Starbuck to the *Albatross*."

Taking a nightcap from a silver and crystal flask, he knitted his brows.

"I think I can manage to lose Mr. Hiram Worth out in the Arctic, and so, pay off the sullen dog! He shall rue the day that he ever lifted his hand against me!"

While the son of the millionaire chuckled, old Starbuck was quietly re-reading the stolen letter!

The jolly revel at "Portuguese Ann's" was broken up by the arrival of a messenger seeking the jovial Gunner Hugh Allerton of the Royal Naval Reserve.

"Steamer in sight, sir, far out, but, with signals red, white and red lights at maintruck! Orders for you tomorrow!"

The coxswain of the *Laurel's* boat drained his grog with wistful glances at the bevy of merry beauties who had gathered around Allerton, Worth and Tarbox.

"Great news!" cried the bluff Englishman, "a bottle of wine all round! No heel taps! Inez, give us that last song!"

"Worth, my boy," cried the gunner, "you look a little down on your luck! Come and ship with me and I'll make your fortune!"

"Whither?" carelessly said Hiram, as Dolores clung to her now reckless lover.

"Ah! There's the rub! It's a secret of secrets!"

Bill Tarbox had stolen away with "Ann" for a few moments to concert new measures with Señor Dominguez, who was feasting "in a fair inner room" with a veiled Pearl of Funchal.

"There's wine, women and song,—beauty, booty, and loot,—fortune and danger both where I'm going!"

"Just the place for me!" recklessly cried Hiram Worth, pressing Dolores closely to his bosom. "I'm tired of sticking whales, though, I've got a fair show for a fortune! We have a plan that will outwit even the last of the Confederate corsairs, if Winslow didn't knock out their whole navy when he sunk the *Alabama*."

In the three days Allerton had learned of Hiram's special experience with firearms, bomb guns, even the signal artillery, and twelve-pounders, carried by ships braving pirates in the China seas. Worth had sunk several pirate junks in desperate fights.

"If I could trust you—only trust you! But you're a Yankee!" doubtfully cried Allerton.

He knew of the wonderful nautical value of this seemingly desperate man.

"A hundred and fifty pounds advance and thirty pounds a month! Gunner's mate with me! You say you can navigate, and, that you are an Arctic, Pacific and Polynesian pilot!"

"I've no home, now!" recklessly cried Worth, "no flag but the 'blue peter!' No country! By God! I've cast mine off forever, and I'll never sail under the grid-iron flag again!"

"Keep this to yourself, Worth!" gravely said the Englishman. "A man is coming here to-morrow, to the Posada Braganza, to see me! A damned sharp fellow, Paul Braxton! *He, too, has lost a country!*" significantly grinned Allerton.

"Let me find you sober here at noon to-morrow! And, cool enough to stand Paul Braxton's quizzing!"

"If you pass him, all right, I may give you a show! But, cool off your coppers! You leave your whole life behind you,—if you come with us! It will be a mad run!"

A dire suspicion, a mad resolve, and a new plan of revenge floated through Worth's heated brain!

"Silence, secrecy—it's for life and death!" growled Allerton, as the voluptuous Ann, with her arms filled

with wine bottles, piloted Bill Tarbox back to the Murrillo-eyed señoritas.

"The man would not live a minute who would betray us! His body would be found in a back street here with a navaja through his heart! We are spending a mint of gold here, and our friends will earn it!—José, Ann's brother, is the chief of our secret agents."

A devilish light shown in Hiram Worth's eyes now! The perusal of the luxurious letter of Jasper Coffin to the Brooklyn Delilah had stirred his very soul. The words maddened him!

"Together, darling, we will laugh at this clumsy fool, —when I come home! The promoted beggar boy who fancies himself a rival of the man whom you have crowned with your love!"

"I see the way now to my revenge," mused Hiram, as Dolores dragged him into a cozy nook to begin her spider wiles, cognizant of his still heavy purse of doubloons.

"Cut off from the land that bore me,—if this fellow and his Paul Braxton are what I take them to be, I can drink the sweetest cup of revenge that man ever tasted! I'll bring the whole house down on them like Samson! But, I must not desert my ship! I must be apparently murdered here, and then, no one will ever know! I must efface myself!!

"For, Hiram Worth will have a new ship under him, a new flag over him, a new name, and no friend but his own stout arm, a full bottle, a fuller purse, a stiff heart and a pretty lass in every port, faithful,—as sailor's sweethearts are,—as long as they are paid!

"All but one,—one black-hearted traitress, who was overpaid, paid in advance, and who, "like the base Judean, threw away a pearl, richer than all her tribe!"

"By the Eternal, I'll see them all ruined. I'll strike at the whole three, and I'll leave a name behind me as red as the sunset before a Japan typhoon!"

Even Bill Tarbox noted the ominous calm which had settled down upon Hiram Worth as the "star dials hinted of morn!"

He had found the one purpose in life which had

been wanting since Bill Tarbox partially lifted the veil,—since Roletta's giddy, treacherous, stony-hearted letter had disclosed her surrender to the moneybags of Zenas Coffin,—bought as a plaything for his son,—and, since Jasper Coffin's intercepted letters had given him the fatal warning!

"Leave it all to me! He will never come back! I have a plan to get rid of him when I get the *Reindeer*!" so wrote Jasper.

Cool, deadly, resolved now,—the young Long Island whaler muttered, "I must hear Jonas Starbuck to-morrow, gain the very last details, learn of his every measure in order to outwit Jasper Coffin,—and then, solve the mystery of the *Laurel*, and that strange ship with the red, white and red lanterns! If it's what I fancy, and Paul Braxton backs up Allerton, then I'll wait till the *Reindeer* sails (for old Jonas will hasten her off), and then conveniently get murdered, the very, very day before the *Reindeer* sails. He's got an extra mate, my will, deposited at the Huntington Bank, will make my poor old mother rich! Jabez and Mehitabel will, also, leave her every dollar they have! They are both rich!

"Yes! I am now ready to die! 'No one to love, none to caress, wandering alone, in this world's wilderness!'"

A song that Roletta used to sing came back to him!

"By the stars above! I'll break her heart by inches," he swore! "And the old man, too, shall pay me off, in drop by drop, of that cur's heart blood! I can see him now at my feet! And they shall live, the usurer and his son's bought wife,—to know that he died the death of a dog!"

"I see that you've caught on!" whispered Hugh Allerton. "That's the tack! I'll meet you here, alone, in my room with Braxton at one to-morrow! Don't be seen on the streets! All our men may be followed by the sneaking Yankee spies!"

With a sweeping motion, he drew aside his gunner's jacket and showed a golden pin, with a flag of thirteen

diagonal stars, set in a St. Andrew's cross. *It was the Confederate flag of battle!*

"For life and death!" swore Hiram, as Inez and Dolores wheedled them away for a final bottle and the last fond good night, only to meet again at morn!

"Now you're on! You know my flag!" growled Allerton. "You're a dead man,—if you peach! We are 'dead game' men!"

The stalwart sailor threw back his head in disdain.

"I'll follow you to the gates of hell, but, I must make my own conditions! I can't appear to *desert* my ship! It would spoil the whole game! They would take alarm! I cannot disappear here! I must be thought to be murdered, and my hat, jacket and pocket articles can be found, flung away, blood-stained, in some dark alley, with a good trail to the water's edge! You have sharks enough here to give me a sailor's burial welcome!"

"You are a proper smart fellow, mate!" cried Allerton. "Something surely drives you on to this! I'll get José and his gang to murder you, decently! Trust to me! What sets you up to this?"

"The old thing!—a woman!" recklessly cried Worth, as he signed to Dolores to open the sparkling wine.

"Just what has filled every forlorn hope in the world!" growled Allerton. "I know 'the worth of a lass,' myself! I've been hard hit! Now, the wide world is my home, and it's off with the old love, and on with the new! To-morrow night you will be one of us, but, your life belongs to this hostile flag, now."

Bill Tarbox, suddenly entering, broke off the conclave.

"Hiram!" he whispered, "Jonas comes ashore to-morrow to pay his bills, he has the legal findings he wants, and he must have a morning 'confab' with you! Walk a chalk line, then, to-morrow, and, the old man will give you the whole business! We'll leave Jasper Coffin in the dark! Only you, I and Starbuck will know where the *Reindeer* goes when the fleet assembles, for, Jonas will send his orders to Honolulu, to

them! We will never touch there on this cruise, and so, this fool Coffin will get no replies to his letters!

"For, our mail will all go to old Kussaroff! Now say good night to Dolores! I want you as right as a trivet till Jonas goes back to the ship!

"Then, fun and frolic till our sailing day! 'Ann' sends her whole 'colony' down at daybreak to Très Palmas Bay and so our men will have five days of a gilt-edged spree! Then, ho, for the land of the bow-heads!"

CHAPTER VIII.

THE "TAKING OFF" OF HIRAM WORTH.

While the iron-nerved Tarbox sat late with the money-scenting "Ann," Hiram Worth, in his secluded room, passed his whole life in review before him, for sleep would not come to his haggard eyes!

Unsapped by dissipation, he was only mentally stimulated by the few days of wild license, and his heart beat like a trip hammer under the impulse of the old Pelvoisin cognac, and the wine of that most fascinating matron, la Veuve Cliquot.

The crushing certainty of Roletta Armstrong's treachery had caused Hiram Worth to forget all but the thirst for a signal vengeance!

His lonely boyhood, the ten years spent in the dull routine of a whaler's drudging life, the mental solitude of long voyages had dwarfed his naturally fine mind.

Beyond practical navigation, the results of his academic education were slowly fading away, from mere mental inanition.

Practically an exile during the three years of the terrible war, his patriotism had lain dormant, until aroused by a mere envy of the dashing volunteer Naval Lieutenant, now his secret tyrant!

Love of country has never been a fierce flame among the canny Long Islanders, who blended the phlegmatic

Dutch, the English Tories and many foreign settlers with the faded strains of the diluted Connecticut Puritan blood.

He lay this night, forgetting all his duty as a man, citizen and a born American, in the one mad desire to strike back at the old usurer.

Tender even in the face of Roletta's treason over her own hand, doubtful even of Tabitha's description of the slyly conducted wedding, Hiram fancied rightly that every art had been used to delude and win away the empty-headed village belle! He was deceived. In his long absence, he had become a mere memory to the young Huntington beauty. "Qui va à la chasse,—perd son place!"

Spurred on by an undying hatred, Jasper Coffin had easily bewitched, by luxury, the time-serving Brooklyn aunt and Roletta's complaisant mother, who saw the golden future of her child as Coffin's wife.

The mortgage hanging over the Widow Worth's home, Hiram's uncertain return,—all this, had aided the easy victory of the dashing golden-haired young officer, who had showered every present, and social courtesy upon the vain girl whose pride and vanity were now aflame!

To aid the son, the father's grudge against Mary Wardour Worth had loosened the old banker's purse-strings.

"Poor child!" fiercely cried Hiram, anxious to excuse the woman who had preferred the son of Dives. "It was simply fear, that held her back, a fear which kept her silent!

"She trembled lest a collision with Jasper might remove her persistent lover and perhaps send me,—to a halter. And so—she was forced to silently accept my three thousand dollars, hoping to return it at the end of the three years of higher education.

"My ring! She took that only because she dared not refuse it!

"Some day, she shall know all! I swear it!

"But, I'll first paralyze all old Coffin's thieving money schemes!"

A pang rent his heart when he thought of loyal old Jonas Starbuck and Jabez Simpson. "Jabez and Mehitabel are both rich and forehanded! Their property will all go to that darling old soul, my mother! She is provided for! Starbuck is fully insured, and, he and Jabez, must be taught to think of me as dead!"

"A full beard, another name,—and—no one will ever know the truth, for not even Bill Tarbox must suspect my desertion! That would have an ugly sound!

"Deserter from my own ship! Traitor to my flag and country! What matters it! I am dead at heart,—a man without a home, a future, what need have I, of flag or country! The sea will hide me,—in life and in death!"

Swept away by a fierce rage, this night made Hiram Worth an Ishmaelite! A Berserker rage possessed him.

"The world's all arrayed against me! It is the power of gold, of lies, of woman's crafty hollow-hearted frailty!"

"Sold like a dog for a few jewels, dresses, and, fleeting pleasures, my promised wife was caught in the meshes of Zenas Coffin's purse,—there is but one way to make Jasper Coffin's wife suffer! Ambitious,—yes! Jonas Starbuck said she was 'coldly ambitious!' I'll wreck every gilded hope that now flatters her!"

He knew well that no single acre of the nine hundred and twenty-seven thousand of Long Island would ever give a traitor a tranquil grave! *But, he forgot this, in his frenzy!*

Throughout the long night he was haunted by legends of the old thirteen Indian tribes of whom to-day only a few Shinnecocks and Montauks exist, half-bred with West Indian imported negroes.

The haughty Gardiners, suzerains of Gardiner's Island,—the unhappy Captain Kidd (but a half-hearted pirate),—Adrianse Bennet's first house on Long Island, built in 1636,—the forerunner of Brooklyn,—he knew its site well,—in the nineteen hundred and thirty acres purchased from the vanished Indians by Jacques Bentyne, and the sly Bennet.

And yet, Hiram Worth rose and nerved himself again with strong drink when he thought of the long roll of Worths and Wardours, of Simpsons, and other sturdy squires, to whom he was saying now an eternal adieu!

At his father's knee, in Captain Ezra Worth's brief home vacations, he had learned of "Lange Islandt," or "Nassau,"—and of the squabbles of Stuyvesant with the inhabitants of the two gigantic townships of Oyster Bay and Huntington, ever at war among themselves, since the Connecticut adventurers had robbed the Indians of their splendid lands for a mere pittance!

The foundations of the old Wardour Home dated from the time of Theophilus Eaton's patent in 1646.

Worth well knew the old beacon site on Hempstead Harbor hill at Roslyn, three hundred and eighty-four feet above the smiling Sound.

With the thrifty Governor Eaton of New Haven as partners in the purchases of 1646 and 1653, were Wardours and Worths; also in 1654, when Lloyd's Neck was purchased by these Oyster Bay interlopers, on terms as easy as the splendid domain of Eaton's Neck.

The shameful record reads as follows: "Six coats, six bottles, six hatchets, six shovels, ten knives, six fathoms of wampum, thirty eel spears and thirty needles," and this trash bought land worth ten millions of dollars, from the guileless savages.

Coffins, forerunners of the usurer of Huntington, had joined in the trades of 1656 and 1657, when Northport and South Neck were added to the other spoil.

The Matinecock, Massapeague and Secatogue tribes sold vast tracts even to the lines of "Smithtown," through the Sachem of Nissaquogue and poor old Wyandanch,—the Grand Sachem of Long Island! The eternal shame of the white intruder!

"Same devilry then, as to-day!" mused Worth, recalling the guilty divisions of the spoil in 1664 and 1666, when sleepy old Huntington was patented as a mere town, yet larger than many European Dukedoms!

To-day, only a little country city, the venerable set-

tlement has seen Chicago leap to the place of a world's metropolis, while the little historic hamlet dreams in its beautiful, memory-haunted valley.

Richard Nicoll, "Governor General under His Royal Highness the Duke of York and Albany," at New York, on November 30, 1666, gave the patent of the town to fifty-seven freeholders. There were Worths and Wardours, even then, among them!

Dongan, in 1685 and 1686, gave new patents to the schemers and the Indians sold new titles to other lands! Truly,—thrifty forefathers!

Lieut. Robert Seeley in 1651, trained the "army" of Huntington to war with the savages, who, later, logically, butchered him! A proper application of the Mosaic laws!

The Fletcher patent of 1694, the Lord Conbury patent of 1703, set up the aristocratic town, whose "ministers and six good men" then banished all "immoral" persons at will! This, in the name of Freedom!

Wardours had fought with the Dutch, in the boundary wars, which finally settled the line between the Dutch and English at the old Townsend mill.

The Plymouth and Massachusetts Bay Colony, in 1643, had given to the United Colonies of New England power "to fight the Dutch," and Worth's ancestors had manfully and loyally served then, and, in the bitter quarrels of Oyster Bay and Huntington, after the vast lands of Oyster Bay were also purchased for a few coats, awl blades, pots and hoes, knives, stockings, shirts, eel spears and a little "wampum." And, we revile our later plutocrats! "O tempora! O mores."

The *Desire* of Barstable, as a warship, supported the two hostile English settlements which both recognized King Charles II. on May 25, 1660. And so the Dutch were baffled!

And in 1683, Sucasemen, Checkagen and Sanose sold the last of their lands, to sixty Oyster Bay freeholders, Governor Andros patenting it in 1677. This was the culminating villainy!

In all this weird descent of title from the easily robbed Indians, the conquered Dutch, the English

crown and the Revolutionary fathers, Hiram Worth, on this fatal night, knew he was throwing away the honor of his ancestors, when he became a castaway upon the sea of Life! And, though crafty, they were no traitors!

"Deserter, yes!" He could not as yet bear to falter the detested word "Traitor," lest the dead should rise to appal him! But, he was in the jaws of the tiger of Fate!

Morning came, bringing a sleepy life again to the old town, now filled with English health seekers, and, keenly alert, Bill Tarbox, having dispatched "Ann's" feminine colony,—mounted guard over the agitated young mariner.

"That's right, Hiram!" said Tarbox, as the sailor made a careful toilet and calmly dispatched his breakfast!

"No nonsense to-day, till you've done with Captain Starbuck! I'll go off to the ship with him, for, the crew will all be mustered to hear Consul Barlow's final decision read.

"'Ann' will look out for you here and I've posted Dolores as to when we sail! Be the man! Forget this fool of a Long Island girl! You can pick and choose when you come back home, a rich man! There are *other women* in the world!"

"I'll obey you, Bill!" firmly said the dissembling Hiram. "But, you must swear to me that you will never disclose anything as to this matter of Roletta! I will not disgrace her, in public! God of Heaven! I love her still!"

And the strong man burst into stormy tears.

"If I had only stayed at home, she would never have been beguiled! My supposed poverty was borne down by old Zenas Coffin's golden bribes!"

"I swear, so help me God!" cried Bill. "I've good reasons! It's a State prison offence to open and rob Jasper Coffin's letters, and both Starbuck and I must seal our lips! A United States Admiralty Court would send us both up!"

"No matter what happens, you'll shield her, save her,

and, if you ever see her, tell her that I loved her more than life! You'll write Tabitha to seal her lips, too!"

"I swear!" solemnly said Tarbox, "for, old Zenas Coffin would rush poor Tabitha away at once to the poor house, if she babbled!"

"My money all goes for drink and women, you know that!"

"In life and death, I'll be true to you, and Starbuck shall never know! He would drive Jasper overboard if he suspected this damned treachery!"

Captain Starbuck's cheery hail, "House ahoy!" below, brought Hiram to a three hours' discussion over every detail of the whole projected voyage, and the management of the two other house boats and the ten New Bedford allies.

"Victory all along the line!" joyously said Starbuck, chatting over a bottle of the best Madeira. "I have the Consul's certified decision now in my pocket! Jasper Coffin either submits or else, he goes home, under control, to stand his trial for inciting a mutiny among the men and officers, as well as tampering with the crew! To-morrow morning, Consul Barlow will come here and take your deposition! Make it simply formal! Jasper's been hit hard enough already, and, I don't want him to fancy you an active enemy!"

"Simply say that you were solicited in the presence of the others, to sustain his view of his so-called rights!"

"Now, my boy!" whispered Starbuck, "I've hidden the *Reindeer* at Très Palmas! I don't like the looks of that big stranger steamer that came in last night and signalled to the *Laurel*. She has steered out to sea and the *Laurel* is going to follow her! If there is any danger, I'll sail for Pernambuco, in Brazil, refit over there, take a slant for Cape Town and so, dodge the devils! I fear she is a disguised enemy!"

"But, lay low! Only the Consul knows our secrets! Say nothing to a soul! I must deceive the whole crew!"

"Bill Tarbox will come and bring you off to the *Reindeer*, for, I'll not let Jasper Coffin know either when we sail, or whither we are bound, till I have prevented him from mailing any meddling letters home to

America! If he gets one away from the ship, it will be stopped! Now, have a good time! Do nothing imprudent! We will wear out Jasper Coffin's impudence!"

With a sly wink, the happy old whaler was gone. His oil was already sold through the Consul and a forty thousand dollar draft was on its way to gladden the home stockholders! The ship was refitted for a long run.

The men were to be "commuted out" on a basis of fifteen thousand, thanks to the official's underhanded help. The balance of the humpbacked catch, too, had been judiciously valued at one-third of the market rates with liberal expense deductions.

But, Jonas Starbuck well knew the temper of his motley and reckless crew!

Ann's gay "colony," a jolly "blow out" for "all hands," would send the men off on their long cruise as happy as the ancient Romans deluded by their rulers with "Panem et circenses." As reckless as Hannibal's soldiers at Capua!

Worth saw the quick wit of Starbuck marketing his "baleen" and oil of the Bermuda humpbacks in the English market, dependent largely now on the produce of the little Belugas of fifteen feet, found along the Greenland coast, or the strange caaing whales, the gregarious sea-herds of the Hebrides and Iceland, with their pitiful twenty-four feet in length.

These puny members of the whale family, sportively called the "howling whale," the "pilot fish" or "social whale," were often penned in the Northern fiords, eleven hundred and ten being killed in one famous Icelandic raid, in one day!

But, Jonas Starbuck had laid out his long voyage to run through the best grounds of the South Cape whales, the giant Rorquals, slate colored, a hundred feet long, fierce fighters and swift, the ugly Cachelots rich in spermaceti and ambergris, with their giant heads, and the vast "Right whale," the Greenland monster, king of the Arctic seas.

"Nothing can prevent old Jonas reaching a fortune!"

mused Hiram, "by this devious, well conceived track and his artfully handled trade. I will find some way to save him! He can be either warned or spared! But as for the rest, 'Delenda est Carthago!' There must be a sweeping destruction!"

Locking the secret in his breast, coldly pitiless now, Hiram Worth awaited, in his own room, the summons of the mysterious English gunner, Hugh Allerton. The unknown steamer was still a mystery! And yet—a strange silence prevailed as to her!

A few doubloons given to Dolores had sent her away in a search for the simple finery of the little shops, while the three men sat down to canvass "a deed without a name!"

Bill Tarbox had accompanied the Captain and the Consul with his official party to be present at the muster of the polyglot crew for the final decision of the Consular Court.

Paul Braxton, a keen gray-eyed man of thirty-four, the very ideal of a sailor, in a suit of plain blue with gold foul anchor buttons, silently watched Worth, while Allerton plunged "in media res." It was a portentous disclosure!

"This man will be invaluable to me as a gunner's mate, Lieutenant!" said the burly Briton. "He knows the risk that he takes, and he is not to separate from me for a moment till he goes on board the *Laurel* or, 'the other!' José and his men are guarding us, both, secretly, for my friend here knows that his life is now in my hands!" A brooding silence followed.

"What's your name?" guardedly asked the stranger, whose every trait bespoke the skilled Naval officer.

There was no "merchant marine slouch" in Paul Braxton's bearing. He was "Navy" in every line of his make up.

The blood ebbed away from Hiram Worth's heart as he sullenly said, "Jack Mason!"

"You are a Yankee?" asked Braxton, doubtfully.

"I was a Northern man, *until a week ago!*" defiantly answered Worth. His defiant tone impressed the stranger.

"What guarantee can you give me that we can trust you?" cautiously said the Southerner, for, Braxton bore his birthright on his face. He was a son of Dixie's Land.

"Only my life!" replied Worth. "But, my special information can only be given to the man who commands that cruiser bearing the 'red, white and red' signals, or to you, by his order, after I am rated. I will talk to but one man! What I have to say, will not bear repeating!"

"Have you thought that any backing and filling would cause you to be tossed to the sharks? That you cannot go on shore once during our long cruise? That your new shipmates will distrust you?" coldly asked Braxton, no lover of a spy.

"How can they distrust me, unless you, Allerton or the Captain, betray me?" forcibly answered the now callous, incipient deserter.

"You will be what men call a traitor, as well as a deserter, my man!" said Braxton, with an impressive emphasis.

"If we should run into trouble, you would not be protected by the laws of war! You would go to the yard arm!"

"I will guard myself!" bluntly said "Jack Mason," the newly baptized ocean rover! "Gunner Allerton knows that I'm supposed to be 'killed by Josè's gang' here! I'll be taken up as 'dead,' on my own ship's papers."

"That's all fair, Lieutenant!" soberly said Allerton. "I'll bring him on either boat you choose, dead or alive!"

"What pay do you ask for your special disclosures?" tentatively said the disguised Confederate.

"Nothing, not a cent!" firmly answered Worth, impatient of these loathsome details.

"I want vengeance, satisfaction, to even up the game of Life!"

"If I give you your hundred and fifty pounds bonus with three months advance at thirty pounds a month, will you obey Gunner Allerton's orders from this mo-

ment? You cannot sign, however, till we are all mustered in, out at sea!"

The Lieutenant closely examined Hiram Worth's unflinching face.

"The advance can wait!" stolidly said the putative "Jack Mason." "I've got five hundred dollars, in good greenbacks, in this belt and forty golden doubloons left! Allerton can give me the money when I'm rated and sworn in! I can do nothing for you till I get to sea, can I?"

"That's true!" calmly said Braxton. "You're not a drinking man?"

"This is the first spree of my life!" resolutely replied Worth. "I only keep up appearances to fool these women and beach combers."

"Then, as you take your life in your hands, Mason," coldly said Braxton, "I'll accept your services, with the understanding that Allerton brings you off to-night! We have fooled away three days here, and this Yankee fellow Consul Barlow is already suspicious of the *Laurel*. We sail at midnight!

"Now, if you dare to face the coldest hearted man who ever handled a Captain's trumpet, you can tell your story to the Commander of the ship that we will cruise on! Should he suspect treachery, you may expect no mercy!"

"I'll risk it!" boldly said Hiram Worth, turning to Allerton.

"You can see Josè and make it for to-night! I'll go out for a walk with Dolores and she can be blindfolded and carried away! This will give credence to the finding of my clothing!"

"The cutter will be off the mole at midnight!" shortly said Paul Braxton, "with one red lantern, in the stern."

"We will be put aboard by a fisher boat!" gloomily said Allerton. "Mason can lie down in it, and so not be seen. Josè will attend to all!"

With a secret shame, Hiram Worth noted that after the bottle of wine, Paul Braxton strode away without even offering his hand to the man whose coming defec-

tion was to make him "deserter," "renegade" and "traitor," all at once!

But, far beyond all these trifling rebuffs, Hiram Worth saw the baleful red star of his coming revenge rising over seas of flame!

Still, he felt that he was only a new Judas, after all, for Hugh Allerton, returning, handed the unhappy lover an envelope without a word. It was the "forty pieces of silver!"

There was the hundred and fifty pounds "bonus" in Bank of England notes, and ninety pounds, the three months advance.

"Strike hands!" heartily cried Hugh Allerton. "You and I will both serve this unseen flag for the lucre, the fun and the adventure! Paul Braxton is a slave to his high flung notions of 'Southern honor,' but, we are simply 'children of the world,' you and I! Rovers, is it not so? I care not where the billows waft me, so 'tis far from thee!"

"Jack Mason" nodded gravely.

"How will you arrange it? I've got to humbug this poor girl Dolores, so that she will bear honest witness!" he said anxiously.

"The best way!" the Gunner replied, "is to make a donkey party to the famous view from the two white towers. I'll get up there with Inez! I've never seen it! We will pass you going up, an hour before sunset, as we come down!"

"The four mile zig-zag has some lonely corners! I'll go off to the *Laurel* at ten o'clock after a public farewell!"

"Sorry not to have seen you and all that! is the game. Inez, of course, does not know! She naturally makes a racket when Dolores does not return! José and 'Ann' will send out the Alguazils!"

"She will be found, poor Dolores, tied and gagged, at one of the little shrines on the end of the lowest zig-zag!"

"There will be the trail of a heavy body in the bushes, bloody trampled sand, and all the signs of a fierce struggle!"

"On the beach, your cast off jacket and shirt, pierced with knives, blood marked and torn, your hat and scattered papers, all will tell of your murder for plunder, and the pitching of your body to the sharks, from the cliff which they call the 'Lover's Leap'!

"A few scattered bits of silver will prove the hasty stripping of your corpse!

"José has, of course, put you on the *Laurel's* boat with the red light where I await you, before 'Ann' arouses the American consulate.

"Barlow and his gang will report to skipper Starbuck, who will be forced to take you up on the log as dead, and the Consul will then report your untimely end to the Secretary of the Treasury at Washington!"

"Good!" cried "Jack Mason," the Man without a Flag or Country! He was in the whirlpool of Fate now!

"I'll give Dolores a twenty pound note before the other girls and then,—and then display my bundle of notes and my gold doubloons. This will be thought later, a lure to robbers!" said the sailor.

"This, alone, in the wine shop, will be reason enough for my 'taking off'!"

Before three o'clock, after a "grand rally" of the Bacchantes and a little overplay of vinous frenzy by the man who was skilfully "shuffling off" the mortal coil of Hiram Worth, a first detachment of the donkey party gaily clattered away, Allerton and the dashing Inez in the lead.

Mother Ann, two hours later, had picked up Hiram Worth's scattered English bank notes a dozen times as he dropped them, while Dolores, waiving her own twenty pound note proudly, vaunted herself above the sly old keeper of the Posada Braganza, whose present of five pounds sterling was but grudgingly received. Worth seemed to be almost helplessly tipsy.

"To-morrow, we'll all go down to the ship! Down to Trè's Palmas, and have a last frolic!" cried the apparently drunken Worth, flourishing his bottle and then leading Dolores away, in a mock chase of the oth-

ers now far up the hill, toward the unrivalled "Look-out View!" He played his reckless part perfectly.

From there, with a beating heart, the English gunner saw a snaky steamer of a thousand tons, far out, gliding easily along toward Las Desertas Islands!

That Tarbox, Captain Starbuck and all concerned were far away on the *Reindeer*, at Très Palmas Bay, only accentuated the uproar when the half-dead Dolores was brought in from the lonely road after midnight, being found tied and gagged by some honest muleteers. A terrible uproar followed the discovery!

The poor Circe was frantic with terror! Her twenty pound note was gone, as well as her new earrings, and her silver filigree cross and necklace. She had been roughly maltreated!

Cries resounded in the streets, lights flared and guardia costas ran to and fro. The little city was all agog!

One twinkling red light far out on the bay marked the spot where the cutter of the *Laurel* had received the missing "Jack Mason," once Hiram Worth, from the artful José. The deception was perfect!

A gleam of porthole lights, a long black ominous trail of funnel smoke and a bacchanalian chorus, wafted over the moon-lit waves, told of the sudden evasion of the *Laurel*. And no one seemed to know aught of the purpose of the two strange steamers!

"If this man turns out what you think he is, Gunner Allerton," sternly said Lieutenant Paul Braxton, "you have captured a rich prize! The Commander alone will deal with him! Let him room with you as your mate, for your life is wagered on his fidelity!" This was "Jack Mason's" greeting on the *Laurel*.

"He will never get away from me!" sternly said Allerton, as he led Hiram Worth away to the steerage of the *Laurel*.

Clad in a Portuguese peasant garb, his hair cut close to his head, smoothly shaven now, and with his fore-arms, hands and shoulders stained a gypsy brown, the deserter would have passed muster unsuspected by

the mother who bore him, as a mere Madeira beach comber.

Already a deserter, Hiram Worth craved, and really needed the consolation of the fiery cognac, for the first time in his life. He had crossed the Rubicon! All his other drinking had been in the frenzy of despair.

Thirty stalwart men were singing "Dixie" and the "Bonnie Blue Flag" in the cabin, as a frantic chorus of defiance to Uncle Sam! The mask was off at last!

"Three cheers for the *Shenandoah*! Hurrah for Southern rights!" rang out the refrain.

And then, Jack Mason, crouched dishonored in a corner of the stateroom where Allerton had wisely left him. He knew, now, the purposes of the mysterious vessel outside.

"To-night a deserter, to-morrow, a traitor! Thank God, they are mourning me already, as dead, on shore! My mother must never know of this infamy!" groaned Hiram Worth.

He bowed his head and tried to fancy the outcry in Portuguese "Ann's" posada.

José had chuckled in the boat over the success of the whole arrangement.

He was to row directly to the mole, now crowded with police, and so prove his alibi of having only taken the jovial Allerton out to the *Laurel*. The rest was easy enough!

Daybreak would bring the prearranged discovery of the torn and knife-pierced clothes, and the death of Hiram Worth would then be an official fact!

"Trust me, Senhor!" simply said José, cut purse and bandit, smuggler and thief.

"I have accepted five hundred milreis in gold to watch the Yankee Consul and the Yankee whaler to see they have no news of the meeting of the *Laurel* and the *Sea King*, at Las Desertas!

"I'll send word by a fishing boat to Senhor Allerton of the outcome of the whole affair."

Steadily churning along out into the night, the heavy-laden *Laurel* followed the light tossing *Sea King* for which she had waited three days, covered by the guns in the old fortresses hewed out of the solid rock.

Dozens of secret friends animated by gain or partisanship watched the plodding merchant steamer and the tall sparred ocean racer, which, three hours later, dropped their anchors in a sheltered bay of the barren rocky islands, as the *Laurel* crept up and anchored a cable's length away, ready to warp alongside in the morning.

Three days later, "Jack Mason," now the sworn gunner's mate of the Confederate States war steamer *Shenandoah*, knew that the wary Captain Starbuck had rushed all his supplies on board the whaler, hastily sent his mail bag ashore, and after being towed thirty miles to sea, had made a hasty departure without ceremony, cracking on every stitch of sail that the staunch *Reindeer* could carry. She fled away like a startled fawn!

And, in the mail bag sealed by Consul Barlow, there was no letter to gladden the heart of the gentle Mary Worth, to excite the alert old Jabez Simpson, or to make Mehitabel Wardour's heart bound with pride.

But, a sealed official envelope bore to the Managing Owners at Cold Spring, the news of the brutal murder of Second Officer Hiram Worth by bandits at Funchal, who had evidently learned the secret of the money belt, from which poor old Bill Tarbox had detached the knife and revolver. An apparently atrocious crime!

"I sent him unarmed to his doom, Captain," blubbered Bill Tarbox, whose letter to Tabitha, his sister, gave every detail of the useless search, the finding of the rent garments, the torn papers and the few silver coins.

"With his knife and pistol, he could have put up a fight, and a good one." So mourned the old sea cook. He was thoroughly deceived.

And thus, while Jonas Starbuck gloomily revolved the tales of a hovering unknown Southern corsair, a fleet successor to the *Alabama*, the *Reindeer* drove along like an arrow to its mark, through storm and giant seas, toward the Brazilian coast. All on board mourned for the dead Second Officer.

"Stole away!" muttered Starbuck. "My plans are

all buried with poor Worth. God have mercy on his poor old mother! I dare not tell her all! Barlow will write the facts, and give the sad details. I'll have to get a good man from Kussaroff at the Kuriles, to represent poor Hiram's silent interest and so act for Jabez, as well as the dead boy. I dare not trust to either Hansbrough or Jessup. They might betray me to Zenas Coffin.

As for Jasper Coffin, any lurking suspicion of his participation in the murder of Hiram Worth seemed madness.

Poor Dolores had truthfully related the sudden onset of the supposed thieves, and it was at some distance from the zig zag road that the "tragedy" had taken place, after the girl had been left with two of the band. She had been gagged and blindfolded.

"Hiram evidently made a manly attempt to free himself," ruefully mourned old Captain Starbuck, "and then, the Portuguese fiends just carved him up." The story seemed to prove itself.

Loud wailing at the "Posada Brazanza" showed the genuine hoodwinking of "Ann" and the Murillo-eyed beauties who, however, found soon other lovers from other ships, to dry their unfrequent tears.

And thus they buried the "murdered sailor" in the oblivion of the death notices, though his body was not found, and, a grim gunner's mate toiling transferring guns, stores and ammunition to the *Sea King*, had left his past life behind him forever. He was a very active corpse!

As for Captain James Iredell Waddell, seated in the cabin of the *Sea King*, in converse with Lieutenant Paul Braxton, he gravely said. "Have Allerton watch over that Yankee traitor night and day till the *Laurel* leaves us.

"Shoot him if he tries to sneak away on the tender, or to get ashore at Las Desertas.

"There are these fisher boats, too, sent by our friends. I'll hear the fellow's story when we have put this ship in commission as the *Shenandoah*, for, after that, he can never go back to America.

"As a merchant deserter, a Yankee traitor, and a renegade, they would hang him, like a dog! And rightly so!

"Navigator, hunter, whaler, man of good family, some education, no drunkard, careless of a money reward, what sent him to this ship, as gunner's mate? Tell me this?" said Waddell.

"Just what sends nearly every man to the devil who takes the slide, a worthless woman," bitterly said Paul Braxton. "But the fellow has a definite purpose, he demands to see you, and says that he has information of moment for you."

"We will see," quietly answered the North Carolinian ex-officer of the United States Navy.

"First, let us make the fleet *Sea King* a regular ship of war, with no harm done to our English friends or our Portuguese hosts. Let us raise the Stars and Bars!

"After that, Braxton, we will go in for what this man wants, revenge! We have our own accounts to settle!

"For, our flag of the Southern Cross is drooping sadly, now!

"Bullock and I are agreed that Admiral Semmes will never get another ship.

"England, France, even little Denmark, all European ports, are closing to us and I think,—I fear,— that ours will be the last flag floating at sea, to defend Southern rights! The end is near! If we cannot conquer on land, by Heaven, I'll leave a trail of burning Yankee ships in four seas, or else sink to the bottom, with our colors flying! I'll never haul them down!"

And the work of transferring the *Laurel's* cargo of munitions and guns from Liverpool, into the steamer which had left London presumably for Bombay was urged on, night and day, as the fleet sea hawk unfolded her wings for the maddest voyage ever recorded in naval annals. "Jack Mason" was a detested Ishmaelite, but his heart burned with the mad desire for revenge!

BOOK II.

IN FOUR SEAS

CHAPTER IX.

A MAD ENTERPRISE.

While the eighty men on the *Laurel* and the fifty on the *Sea King* worked with a feverish energy for two days in transferring the entire cargo of the *Laurel* to the almost empty mysterious steamer, Jonas Starbuck had been harassed at Très Palmas Bay in keeping his sixty drink-maddened whalers from a raid of vengeance upon the town of Funchal.

Hiram Worth, the dead second officer, "spirited away and murdered for his money-belt," had been a favorite, a daring commander in the whaling duels, and the very pride of Cold Spring Harbor. The deception was a perfect success.

It needed all Consul Barlow's tact to keep the peace, to rush the ship's supplies down, and to stimulate the Funchal authorities to concoct a convenient tale, that the stalwart young American had been slain by some jealous lover of the beautiful Dolores, who had satisfied a sudden jealousy, effected a neat robbery, and effectually terrorized the poor girl of the Murillo eyes, who now forgot all save the apparently desperate struggle in which Worth had been vanquished.

The astute Bill Tarbox, even, was deceived by the plausible surroundings of José's neat kidnapping of the unhappy deserter.

Jasper Coffin—balked of his vengeance—gazed from the deck of the *Reindeer* at the black fins of the gliding sharks and sighed, "I would have liked him to have suffered! Fate is against me! I never settled with Worth for that beating! But," he smiled with a comfortable sense of the future results of the "higher training" in Brooklyn. "Roletta has the lucky hand! Her pathway in life is now made smooth!

"Position, money, youth, good looks, education, all hers, she will be a lovely monument of my revenge!

"And that respected old governor of mine will now have to take out his dislike of the young ruffian's family in swallowing up Jabez Simpson's whaling stock, trying to capture old Mehitabel's estate and finally bringing in the Wardour place to round out his grounds!

"He has sworn to make a pig sty of the ruins of the old Wardour home! Feels the jilting, after thirty years!

"And I alone am robbed of the pleasure of my neat victory over Roletta's girlish affections! That hulking brute who went to the sharks never knew how I had outwitted him! Love's labor lost!"

Josè Oliviera, the bandit accomplice of "Jack Mason," the man now without name, flag or country, feverishly toiled to get the *Reindeer* away to sea, diligently spreading rumors calculated to further befog the authorities who, in fear of the crew's resentment, hustled all formality away to rid themselves of this ominous visitor at Très Palmas.

The *Reindeer* was heavily fitted out for defense in the China seas, and for the Arctic hunting, and with her desperate men all armed, could have easily raised a serious riot in Funchal.

But, the official announcement of Consul Barlow's home despatches calmed the excitement, the bag of mail of the *Reindeer* was sealed to await the first passing American ship, then, alas, so rare, and Mr. Jasper Coffin's despatches to his money-worshipping father, were all withheld for three months by a private arrangement with Jonas Starbuck.

Cowed and paralyzed by Starbuck's energetic measures, Jasper Coffin frankly "surrendered at discretion" to his veteran commander.

"Let us work together for the good of the voyage, the crew and the future of the company," said Coffin, dissembling his wrath. "I see now the informality of my father's hasty action."

Hiram Worth removed forever by the tragic "assassination," Jasper Coffin's ability as a navigator was the mainstay of Starbuck, whose secret plans were all shattered.

Even his "private trade" was endangered, and so, while a fortunate squall drove the *Reindeer* four hundred miles off shore in the first thirty hours, Starbuck forgot his genuine sorrow over Worth's untimely taking off, in selecting Jessup as second officer and giving Hansbrough, a veteran, the charge of the whaling guns and boat work.

"I can get another good fellow from Kussaroff as an extra third officer," mused Captain Starbuck, "and the easy way is the best, now, with Jasper Coffin, for, poor Worth is gone forever! No one knows of my secret preparations.

"Neither Simpson nor the women know of Hiram's two thousand dollars! I can hoodwink Jasper and give him the command of any one of the other twelve ships if a vacancy occurs and so keep old Coffin's good will."

And thus, while the supposed "Jack Mason" toiled on the *Laurel* with Allerton, transferring heavy guns and explosives to the *Sea King*, the hard-hearted Starbuck saw a silver lining to the cloud. But, he mourned in his blunt sailor way.

"It's rough on Roletta Armstrong," muttered the old Captain. "I suppose that smart girl will, however, follow my lead! She'll just pocket poor Hiram's three thousand dollars, marry some one else, and, say nothing! She's a great manager, a contriver and ambitious!"

But one man on the *Reindeer* preserved a sour neutrality to the now deferential Coffin, at heart only waiting to grasp the command of the ship at Honolulu.

The oath to the dead still sealed Bill Tarbox's lips, but he hated Jasper Coffin with a deadly ferocity.

"All along of your sneaking tricks, my fine fellow," mused the old steward, "my boy Hiram was cut to ribbons with them Portuguese knives.

"He was driven foolish, reckless, desperate, and I, to save him from murder, left the boy, unarmed, ashore! I'll lock the whole thing up in my heart. It would only break up the last bit of comfort in three lives for the people at home to know how and why poor Hiram Worth died."

And so, Worth's treason and desertion, Jasper Coffin's treacherous marriage and all the intrigues of the boat which had sailed on that unlucky Friday were wrapped in the darkest mystery.

The disgraceful recrudescence of the Long Island renegade was unsuspected by the shipmates who feared to bring up the terrible omen of the mysterious death of their best officer.

Driving ahead under full sail in danger of losing his masts, Jonas Starbuck obeyed a mysterious hint of some unexplained danger, due to José's craft, acting for those who wished to fill their pockets in fitting out and handling the affairs of the two mysterious English steamers now hiding in Las Desertas Bay. And so, with both interest and mystery to cloud his memory, Hiram Worth seemingly passed, forever, from the minds of the shipmates who all shared the superstitions of the simple-minded sailor folk.

And thus, no taint of shame clung to the memory of "Hiram Worth" when the slowly crawling American-African trader brought the free mail bag, six months later, to New York City.

While the whole money-making population of Funchal was agog over the visit of the two mysterious English steamers to Las Desertas and a dozen barges with fresh supplies, and a hundred tawny laborers, had been dispatched to the barren group only three hours steam away, a passing swift English mail steamer had already reached Liverpool with Jonas Starbuck's skil-

fully worded directions to the Cold Spring and New Bedford whalers.

This missive, mailed by Consul Barlow within an hour of Bill Tarbox's first landing, directed only the supply ship, *Albatross*, to call at Honolulu. The two Coffins were baffled.

The careful plot to protect Jonas' "secret" trade operations had succeeded and the cheering news of the *Reindeer's* profitable catch off the Bermudas brought joy to the syndicated owners, in late October. A golden harvest seemed assured.

Wisely concealing the quarrel with Jasper Coffin, the old skipper reiterated his directions for all the association's whalers to stand down below the Cape of Good Hope,—taking water at McQuarie or Emerald Islands, and, then, leaving New Zealand to port, stand north again on the meridian of 180° and touch only at Norfolk Island, the Marshall Islands or the Bonin Islands, thus meeting the *Reindeer*, later, at the Japanese group of the Kurile Islands where Kussaroff's schooner the *Favorite*, would have all the association's mail brought up from Honolulu, her outfitting port.

The good news brought joy to all the owners and the families of the crew.

The magic words "All well on board," sent a thrill of joy from Roletta Coffin's Fort Greene Place home to the modest households of the Simpsons, Wardours and Worths.

The later letters of Starbuck doubly justified his sly schemes by the rumors of a forlorn hope Southern cruiser which hoped to sweep the equatorial narrow gap of the middle Atlantic and prey on all incoming and outgoing Yankee ships crossing the line.

Just when, where or how this new "commerce destroyer" would materialize, Starbuck could only guess from past experience, but the alert Southern sympathizers in the British colony at Madeira could have informed him in detail, but for their hopes of profit. Still the sly Starbuck had guessed the secret!

While the whole "underworld" of Funchal was aiding the two still mysterious steamers at Las Desertas,

Jonas Starbuck's bold dash out to sea saved him from being the first prey of the last fierce cormorant of the expiring Confederacy.

With the easy confidence of "stay at home heroes" the money men of Cold Spring and New Bedford laughed when Jonas Starbuck's budget of good and bad news, forebodings and prophecies reached them.

Grant had paused after the horrible slaughter of the Wilderness,—Lee's skeleton army was still grimly holding on to Petersburg,—Sherman had Atlanta by the throat, and the fierce Hood was recklessly marching to the battle immolation of his last army before Thomas' invincible line at Nashville.

The money men laughed at the idea of a new Southern cruiser. "Old Jonas is nervous!" they concluded, in their conceit.

"Recognition is now impossible," mused old Zenas Coffin. "The cotton export cut off, only Mobile and Fort Fisher as half open ports, both blockaded; the Laird rams, the French ironclads, detained, the Confederacy split into three parts,—bankrupt, staggering to a heroic death, these fears of Starbuck's are groundless."

All knew that Admiral Semmes and his survivors of the *Deerhound's* escape were cooling their heels, shipless, and, even moneyless, in England, though they were "social lions."

"No! a bugaboo, an old sailor's yarn!" chimed in the wise New Bedford whaling owners.

And, while Mary Worth and Mehitabel Wardour fondly followed Jabez Simpson's chart and his wise explanations, Roletta Coffin, cheered by her triumphant mother, petted by her proud aunt, pampered by Zenas Coffin, was still vaguely apprehensive of some clash between the two men who had loved her.

The man whom she had married and the man whose loyal heart she had broken! Victims, both, of her arts!

But, all seemed peaceful from Starbuck's first hurried despatch. "He can never know till his return," was Roletta's weak imagining, "then I can give back

his money, and my marriage with Jasper can be openly celebrated. All is well! I am safe!"

Jasper Coffin had vaguely calmed her fears by his intimation of some plan to get rid of Hiram Worth.

That this plan contemplated abandoning his one-time conqueror to the icy blasts of the Arctic, in an open boat, would have curdled the blood of the girl whose mere vanity and love of show had made her an easy prey to the insincere circle around her. Coquette, she was, but, no murderess!

So, while "Jack Mason" toiled on the *Laurel* with the energetic Hugh Allerton, no suspicion either on the *Reindeer*,—or at home, suggested the somewhat ingenious theory of a self-arranged kidnapping, a fictitious murder, and, a practical desertion.

The final damning disgrace of an insensate treason was to come before the sweet cup of revenge could be quaffed.

From the cliffs, like sculptured Arran, which bound Madeira from the "Pico Ruivo," from the Castell,—the gossips of Funchal gazed with telescopes, at the two tall ships lashed together far out on the blue expanse by the unpeopled rocks of Las Desertas.

The port authorities were mystified by the military looking crowd of thirty "passengers" on the *Laurel*, with her full complement of men, and a heavy draft of artisans and shipwrights.

The lean ocean racer, the *Sea King*, was almost devoid of cargo, and, but thirty souls were on board of her.

Three days after the hurried departure of the *Laurel* a grand fête-champetre was given in the weird glen of the "Curral," where a now falling flag was toasted by secret sympathizers in the choicest vintages of the grapes treasured as Madeira's riches since 1421, when the Cama de Lobos was planted with vines brought from the Portuguese mainland and Candia's choicest growths were introduced in 1445.

The hardy Portuguese in 1416 had found an ocean Paradise in the northern Canaries and English colonists

soon divided this ocean gem with the lively and artless Portuguese settlers.

Though every possible supply had been rushed down to Las Desertas, not one of the secret friends knew the story of the "nameless" ocean racer soon to be famed as the last "sea scourge," flying the Stars and Bars.

Even the alert and greedy American Consul had been fooled to the top of his bent—the country excursion being given to keep him away from the sea shore gossips.

The inopportune arrival of the *Vanderbilt* or *Tuscarora* might have changed the most lurid chapter of the naval history of the Confederate States of America.

It was on the last night of the stay in Las Desertas Bay when Allerton, "Jack Mason" and the boatswain of the still innocent *Sea King* sat in Allerton's state-room on the *Laurel*, engaged in a final carouse.

The third officer of the *Laurel* joined them with a couple of magnums of champagne.

"To-morrow we separate, mates," said Roger North, "and my heart will be in my mouth till the old *Laurel* puts a hundred miles between her and the *Nameless*. This is a risky job!"

"Give us the whole story, now," cried "Jack Mason," eager to pierce the mystery of the last ten days of his life.

For, he but dimly followed the sparing hints of the story of the *Sea King*.

"Here goes!" cried Boatswain Fuller, as North opened a fresh magnum.

"Last year, Stevens and Son launched on the Clyde, this rakish beauty lying alongside of us now.

"Six hundred and ninety tons register, with 220 horse power (nominal), and auxiliary engines,—I went out to New Zealand, on her first voyage, as a British transport.

"Her record under sail alone, of three hundred and twenty miles in twenty-four hours, stamped her at once as a racer!

"I fell in love with the dainty sea bird and so, I shut my eyes just after the sinking of the *Alabama*,—four

months ago,—when a lot of strangers, “men from the States,”—one by one, poked their noses all over her.

“I can’t tell you of the slyness with which we have dodged the Yankee Minister’s swarming spies, but, the *Sea King* has been fitted out with stores for a twelve months cruise under Captain Corbet.

“When we left London docks, on October seventh, our clearance called ‘for Bombay,’ and ‘any other East Indian ports on a voyage not to exceed two years.’

“But long heads, wise heads, had picked out for us a destination, always deserted, and, where English owners, British friends, the government—our Portuguese helpers, and the Southern secret service would violate no jot or tittle of international law. No complications for us this time!

“These three islands—‘Bugio,’ ‘Deserta Grande,’ and ‘Chao,’ are absolutely uninhabited.

“Pasturage and water are all the riches of these rocky deserts.

“The two smaller islands, a mile long, give no hiding place, but these bays and coves of ‘Deserta Grande’ with its six miles of length, are the best place I know to shelter these two vessels in outfitting the flying *Sea King* as a war vessel. No Yankee passing can find us here!


“There is no national responsibility, for, only the fishermen and herdsmen come,—once a year, to this ‘no man’s land’ of the Las Desertas group—when the running of the fish or the removal of the fattened cattle, call for a visit.

“I could see that every mistake which has been made about the other Southern cruisers is to be avoided this time.

“Your commander is a man who will surely startle the world! Bold, dashing, brave, and, above all, wise!

“And, if I mistake not, he’ll write the name of his States spies, and so stood boldly out to sea.

“That’s the right idea. Despoil the money-grabbing Yankees! Trust, then, to the swift heels of the *Sea King*. Nothing has ever yet overhauled her. Poor Semmes. He only fought when he could no longer



run. Yet, a brave sailor. It was a mistake to put a worn-out 'pick-up' against a heavy war ship—well handled! Still, the *Alabama* made a gallant fight!

"I struck up a secret friendship with Cornelius E. Hunt, a man you will all see and through him I began to know Admiral Semmes, Commander Kells, Captain Bullock, and a dozen other Southerners, their officials, and a gentleman whom you will both face to-morrow.

"We've got the English flag over us still, twelve months coal in her, but there are only two brass twelve pounders on her so far.

"We made a jolly sneak out of the Thames, telegraphing to 'some one' in Liverpool.

"We were quietly watched by friends down to the Nore! Clear of all entanglement, here we are, and you men ought to know what you've put aboard of us. We've got the swiftest, staunchest ship of our size, on the wide ocean! Good luck to her, whatever flag she flies!"

There was a ringing chorus as the blunt Boatswain looked at Officer North.

Roger North grinned as he lit a good cigar.

"I won't tell you fellows," he good-humoredly cried, "of whom the *Laurel* got her cargo at Liverpool or who paid for it!

"'Mr. Cash' was our friend, whoever he is, but I think I've seen some of the men the Boatswain has named, dodging around the Mersey.

"At eight p.m. on the evening of the seventh of October, while we lay out in the stream, a secret Confederate agent roused up twenty hidden friends scattered all over Liverpool.

"An hour later a tug brought them all alongside.

"'Mr. Cash's' agents furnished us then with a commander in the shape of Lieutenant Ramsay of the Navy of the Confederate States of America, and with legal papers 'for Nassau.'

"Under the English flag, we dodged all the United States spies, and so stood boldly out to sea.

"Off Holyhead, we took up passage tickets from everyone of the strangers, 'good for Havana, for thirty-

two pounds each,' and all signed 'Henry Lafone,' whoever he may be.

"Safely out on the blue water, our dare devils broke loose, and I then recognized men once famed on the *Sumter*, the *Alabama*, and the *Georgia*.

"We had taken our French leave at four a.m. and so cracked on all the steam we could carry, though laden to the gunwales.

"Steering direct for Funchal, we lay here, all on the 'qui vive' till the 'red white and red' lights of the *Sea King* called us out of the harbor on the evening of the third day.

"You know, Allerton, with the help of the artificers and the Portuguese fishermen here, you and 'Mason' have put the full cargo of guns, ammunition and stores over on the *Sea King*, and I never saw better work than you've done, handling those heavy guns with our light tackle.

"To-morrow morning we pull out and by sunset, we will be off for Liverpool.

"Where you will go, God only knows, but, here's sailor's luck and a fair field! I only pray you'll be in readiness for a fight before the damned Yankees blunder alongside of you!

"It has been marvellously well done! No *Alabama* entanglements," laughed burly Hugh Allerton, as they finished the magnums, and then lay down to sleep to be roused two hours before day by the boatswain of the *Sea King*.

Callous and desperate now, Hiram Worth "walked the plank" to the decks of the *Sea King*, boldly inscribing his name as "Jack Mason," on the "Bombay shipping articles."

The artificers were still swarming all over the *Sea King*, quickly cutting gun ports, and laying down gun traverses, as the *Laurel*, with steam up, having finished the last transfers, stood off a few cable lengths.

It was at four in the afternoon that a ringing bugle called the whole ship's company aft.

There, in the lonely bay—with the gaping fishermen and all the crew of the *Laurel*, as curious spectators,



James Iredell Waddell, in the full uniform of a Confederate naval captain, surrounded by all his officers, in warlike garb, read the letter of the Secretary of the Confederate States Navy, placing the war steamer *Shenandoah* duly in commission.

Reading his own commission then, he defiantly raised the "Stars and Bars" over the still unarmed vessel, and so, on the 18th of October, 1864, a new *Alabama* rocked on the waters of the neutral Portuguese province.

There was no enthusiasm; not a single cheer of the men as Waddell announced his determination to prey on the commerce of the detested Yankees, the coming crash of the Confederacy being written on all faces.

But, fifteen pounds cash bounty, with a pay from four to seven pounds per month, brought twenty-three of the *Laurel's* men over to join the slender crew of the new corsair.

When the *Laurel* steamed away, with three rousing goodbye cheers, "Jack Mason" stood alone after repeating his oath of enlistment. He was now a disgraced recreant!

Only Allerton's question, "Any letters, Jack?" recalled him.

"I have no home but this deck, no flag but that,—not a relative in the world!" said the gunner's mate, whose heart beat its death-knell, whispering: "You are a traitor now, a renegade and—a criminal deserter!"

There were but forty-two men, of whom nineteen were officers, on board the newly-baptized *Shenandoah* when the *Laurel* faded away, scurrying home safely under the British flag.

The deck was littered up with cases of private effects, each officer's luggage being marked with his initial, enclosed in a diamond shipping mark.

These, the fishermen of Las Desertas soon carried below, while Allerton, "Jack Mason" and every available man and officer toiled to mount the guns for protection and offence.

So slim was the crew, the engines could only be run at ten knots, for want of a full force of firemen.

Yet, with a feverish zeal, magazines were built; port-holes finished, water taken on and all the cargo stored ship-shape.

Paul Braxton coldly said to Jack Mason, "Captain Waddell will send for you the moment that we are out of sight of land. You are working like a hero, I must say!" The Southern aristocrat could not, however, conceal his scorn of the renegade.

Care and anxiety ploughed every brow, till on October 20th, the white wings at last were spread, the engines turned and soon, the half-armed *Shenandoah* left Las Desertas far behind! Madeira was now only a blue hovering mist in the distance.

Hiram Worth lost his memory in the fierce potations which soon made "Jack Mason," the wildest dare devil of the saucy *Shenandoah*.

As the fleet racer skimmed away seaward, "Jack Mason" bitterly repeated the haunting lines of poor Adah Menken, which seemed to ring his knell:

"Myself! Alas! For theme so poor,
A theme, but rich in fear!
I stand, a wreck on Error's shore,
A spectre, not within the door,
A houseless shadow evermore,
An exile, lingering here!"

CHAPTER X.

TRAITOR AND DESERTER.

On the very first day of the astounding cruise of the *Shenandoah*, Hiram Worth felt that, while he could lie to all others, he could not lie to himself. He was desperate.

Death before him, shame behind, he worked like a madman, and found "the devil in the bottle" to be his best friend.

But for a desire to face one man alone, of all on earth, he would have hurled the Judas money overboard and

then followed it into the depths from whence the hungry sharks watched the war flag of Lee and Jackson flying over a boat destined never to fire one single honorable shot in battle! And yet, a vessel which made the world's most astounding cruise—baffling a mighty nation in arms!

Only a fierce cormorant with its slanted wings, carrying fire and destruction, with the torch of the Vandal among helpless victims. She stood out to sea, with every chance against her, half-manned, half-armed, and half-fitted.

"After I have met Jasper Coffin," muttered gunner's mate "Jack Mason," "there is surely time enough, for suicide!"

Clad in his new Confederate uniform of a petty officer, Hiram Worth had left all his old life behind him.

Well he knew the tenderness with which old Jonas Starbuck would send all his effects home to the farmhouse at Huntington.

"It is well!" growled Hiram Worth. "They will really think me dead. I am dead—to all but,—my coming revenge."

Only the loyal American eagle on a five-hundred dollar note in his belt was left to remind him that he once had a country. That he was, once,—a man!

Clad in his Portuguese rags, he had come to the Confederacy in shameful guise, as a shameful gift of Fate.

But, by October twenty-first, in twenty-four hours from the sailing, "discipline" was established on the *Shenandoah*,—the watches were divided, and two eight-inch shell guns and a thirty-two pounder Whitworth rifle grinned through the raw portholes of the racing corsair. She was soon ready to bark and bite!

On the twenty-second, by ceaseless labor, two more eight-inch guns and the mate of the Whitworth were in their places, as well as the two brass twelve-pounders aft.

Shot and shell were served out, the arm racks were filled, drills were established, the magazines filled with powder, and, by the twenty-eighth, the eight-gun cruiser was in as fair working order, as fifty-three men

in all, could bring about, in a war ship whose complement was at least two hundred. But, the natives had aided in the heavy drudgery.

Gunner Hugh Allerton, exhausted by dissipation and overwork, was sleeping like a tired dog when a marine ordered "Gunner's mate Jack Mason" into the presence of the Commanding Officer.

Silent, fierce, gloomy, Hiram Worth faced the stern man of forty in the chart room, who said, "Braxton tells me that you have some plans for this ship. Be brief! Give me your plans, with their reasons!" It was a rough greeting.

Lieutenant Hunt had frankly related the career of the able North Carolinian captain, to both Allerton and Jack Mason.

Born in 1824, entering the Navy as midshipman in 1847, young Waddell was already a brilliant lieutenant of the United States Navy, in 1855.

In China, in 1860, he had led a daring expedition into the interior. Fourteen years after, he first put the "foul anchors" of Uncle Sam on, the distinguished sailor "went out with his State," deeply regretted by the whole Navy.

A lieutenancy in the Confederate naval service gave him laurels in the desperate action at Drewry's Bluff, where the United States river fleet was terribly defeated, the *Galena* being sunk, and, the James firmly closed to further Yankee attack.

Early realizing that river and harbor boats, "patched up" at home, must at last fall easy victims to the heavy Union fleet, James Iredell Waddell, full of ocean lore and "burning ambitions," sought "special service" in Europe in 1863.

And so, this crafty man, cool and experienced, in the flower of his age, had made a splendid début, when he faced "Jack Mason," in getting the *Shenandoah* out to sea, as a minister of a useless vengeance,—though, with but a skeleton crew.

Hopeless yet defiant, Waddell determined to strike the giant foe where the greatest harm could be done, wisely choosing a swift sailer, using little coal in view

of an increasing world hostility and the closing of all friendly ports. The coal he kept for a quick run and for safety when near shore.

Desperate, fearless, shameless, Hiram Worth poured out, for an hour, all his story, unveiling all the intricate plans of Starbuck and the New Bedford fleet, to the bronzed Confederate, who silently judged him.

"You know the Arctic?" Waddell finally said.

"Every inlet!" proudly replied the Long Island traitor. An examination proved this.

"What's your motive?" bluntly demanded Waddell.

"To find one man,—we must catch my ship! To catch her, you must nab the whole lot. You can do what you wish to with them. I only want to face my man!"

"It's a mad enterprise," thoughtfully said the Confederate Captain.

"No madder than your cruise!" boldly said Hiram Worth. "You know that the Confederacy will not last a twelvemonth longer!"

"If you play me false, you die!" firmly said Waddell.

"Shooting or drowning is as good as—suicide, or hanging," gravely answered the ex-Second Officer of the *Reindeer*.

"After I've got my man, I expect to pay the price! We all do sooner or later. He must die and I, care for nothing after that."

"I'll send for you, when I'm ready," said the Confederate Captain. "Keep a shut mouth! Braxton's the only man on board who has a hint of your past, save Allerton."

"I'm not likely to babble," coldly said Jack Mason. "My plan is infamous, I know it! And yet, there is a guilt greater than mine! A first treason which made me a traitor."

"Do you expect promotion—or, a later money reward?"

"Not a damned cent!" cried Hiram Worth, as he saluted and retired. The Confederate gazed with a genuine sorrow, at Hiram Worth's retreating form. "Poor devil."

"A neat little bit of the work of the 'eternal feminine!' " mused Waddell. "That fellow's no real traitor at heart! As true to his flag, to-day, as I am, to old North Carolina,—and, the Stars and Bars. His book of life puts him up as a dead loser, in any event. I may, however, make it a 'double revenge.' But, like all renegades, he'll bear watching. Allerton did secure a prize! He is a splendid subordinate. And, his information is priceless!"

The nervous tension on the crew of the corsair was almost unendurable.

Green men, short crew, all dabsters at arms and the heavy guns, save the officers, Gunner Allerton rightly summed it up when he "spliced the main brace," with "Jack Mason."

"It's legs, not arms, with us, my boy, if we run into anything that carries guns! What did the old man say?"

"Nothing much," vaguely cried the renegade, swallowing a three-finger drink, as the cry "Sail ho!" from the "cro'nest," roused all to action. It was the first ocean meeting!

A heavy barque under the English ensign, nine hundred miles from Funchal, was the first vessel hailed by the now hungry *Shenandoah*, for, the corsair was now ready for war.

That she was American built, sold to the Italians as a subterfuge under the name of *Le Monque*, was reported by the boat's crew, who found the American captain and his family crazed with fear, at the mere sight of the Confederate flag now floating openly.

Standing away, missing two distant sails on October 30th, the *Shenandoah*, now in fair order, clean as a racer, hove to the barque *Alina*, the first prize, and whose Yankee Captain Hicks, had named her for his little daughter.

It was Allerton and "Jack Mason" who tossed the first screaming shell across her bows. *The game of war was on, at last!*

The motley crew of the *Shenandoah* howled with a fierce joy as, an hour later, the *Alina*, valued at \$95,-

ooo, sank with all her sails set, being first robbed, and then promptly scuttled.

"Jack Mason's" face burned with a sullen glow of shame as six of the Yankee crew promptly joined the *Shenandoah*.

"Not the only traitor!" he sobbed, turning his head away.

Six days later, after a wassail over the "first victim," the corsair easily ran down a fore and aft schooner, the *Charter Oak*, bound from Boston to San Francisco.

After the Captain, his wife, sister and a child were all removed, the prize was stripped of furniture, food and supplies, and made the first bonfire of the fleet cruiser.

For three days, the *Shenandoah's* crew labored in arranging the rich plunder of two vessels. The booty and useful supplies were most welcome.

Settling "down to business," on November 8th, the American barque *D. Godfrey*, from Baltimore to Valparaiso, was stripped of her valuables, her beef cargo was removed, with what valuable stores were needed, and she too, was left, a blazing wreck in the Middle Atlantic. The Confederates were jubilant.

Four more scoundrel recruits were obtained to help man the heavy guns of the new warship.

Still no message from the Captain came to "Jack Mason," now busied in instructing the new men in gunnery.

On November ninth, a Danish brig took off all the *Shenandoah's* prisoners, the Scandinavian captain gracefully accepting two of the finest captured chronometers, as well as his profitable contract, to land the astounded American mariners.

"These fellows will soon spread the news. 'Uncle Abraham' will soon start a dozen cruisers after us," growled Hugh Allerton, now sobered and a stately martinet.

"We must get more men at the batteries! Have regular gun practice, and small arm drills, or, we will all be snaked in, by some tenth-rate Yankee gunboat."

Captain Waddell, inspecting "Jack Mason's" work,

quietly observed, "I will send for you soon! Keep sober, my man,—while on this ship!" Mason saluted in silence.

On the next day, under full steam, the brig *Susan*,—laden with coal from Cardiff to South America, was plundered and scuttled, an easy prey. The *Shenandoah* had fleshed her sharp talons at last!

Two more "fashionable deserters" swore allegiance to the "Stars and Bars," thus increasing the "renegade" detachment of shame, and, "Jack Mason" despised them all!

In splendid weather, with dexterity, the now practiced cruiser, flying the English flag, neatly gathered in the *Kate Prince*, a handsome twelve-hundred-ton American clipper.

These bloodless captures ceased to even excite the crew of the last of the Confederate ocean war steamers! It all seemed so easy!

Ransomed for a forty-thousand-dollar bond, after due stripping and many "contributions," the prisoners and some women and children were all put on board this, the first vessel spared by the inexorable Waddell.

An exciting chase of the fleet schooner *Lizzie M. Stacy* on November eleventh, pulled the victim up after shotted guns had conquered the bold defiance by the determined Yankee Captain.

Near the Equator, the beautiful craft was stripped and then burned, a spectacle of melancholy destruction, after being most systematically looted.

The next day, a grand celebration commemorated the "crossing of the Line" south.

"Blow me!" cried Gunner Allerton, in his character of King Neptune. "I'd like to see us join the ironclad *Stonewall*, now sneaking out of Copenhagen, for Corunna.

"With a good crew and sure gun practice, that one little Confederate ironclad and our own swift boat might sink a Yankee war vessel and, thus, repeat the 'Hatteras trick.'"

"Legs and arms," sadly said the disguised Hiram Worth. "We must run for it!"

A full beard now covered his face, an adornment which never left him afterwards, till he had learned all the final secrets of this vain life! For, in the glass, "Jack Mason" was ashamed to look at what was once a man!

Sinful, foolish, erring, yet once, an honest man!

A moody fierceness, secret habits of drink and an Ishmaelish defiance of all his kind now characterized "the abhorred traitor" who had come "of his own accord" to haul down the defenceless flag which had given him birth and shelter, under its hallowed folds, "the flag that never goes back!"

Secretly watched, silently detested, the ex-whaler lived only in his dreams of a coming vengeance, never even hinting to Hugh Allerton the outcome of two long private conferences with Captain Waddell when the two men's heads met over chart and sailing plans for hours. The Confederate knew the value of his traitor recruit now.

Waddell's significant motion of a finger on his lips was accompanied with a pantomime of drawing his hand across his throat.

"You will trust me, yet!" sadly said "Jack Mason," "even, though I am lower than a dog!"

And James Iredell Waddell sighed, as he gazed into Hiram Worth's haggard eyes.

The Yankee volunteer deserters, victims of circumstance in their aristocracy of crime, avoided the "crafty Yankee traitor," whose pathway was shunned by all, for, in some way, "Jack Mason's" Northern birth had leaked out.

A magnificent run to Latitude 27° 30' South, only brought to sight one English vessel.

"The seas are skimmed clean of prizes," growled Waddell. "Fear and interest have done their work."

Two days later, on November 28th, four vessels were chased, all strangely eluding the nimble freebooter.

Another disappointment on December fourth, brought an American ship, also, artfully sold to the Italians, under the guns of the *Shenandoah*.

With "curses loud and deep," she squared away,

mocking the grinning guns of the now dangerous batteries.

The indefatigable officers of the cruiser had now beaten the raw material into splendid shape and "all went merry as a marriage bell," on the now well-appointed war vessel.

"Men, more men! is what we need," growled Allerton. "And, one good stand-up fight, to clear our honor!"

"It would be madness!" coldly said Hiram Worth, "without a hundred and fifty well broken-in men! And, this cruise, so far, has not paid for the oil on the engines."

It was indeed true! Hiram Worth saw, with a secret glee, that Captain Waddell was daily swinging nearer in line with the Long Island traitor's projected mad enterprise!

On November 28th, the first American whaler, the barque *Edward*, fell into the clutches of the Southern war ship.

Brave old Captain Worth, beloved even by his captors, for his patriotism and dignity,—wept, as the flames, fed by his ship and cargo, lighted up the lonely ocean. The name startled the traitor!

And then, Hiram Worth hid himself in shame, as he saw the spirited young Southern officers comforting the gallant old man, who raised his hat solemnly as the *Edward* carried the American flag down with her, still flying in honor!

"Let me once get at Jasper Coffin!" cried "Jack Mason," with clenched fists. "After that, a pistol ball through my head will stop my thinking."

For every breeze that blew, only hoarsely murmured "Traitor! Renegade!" in his ear.

"Is my vengeance worth all this?" the poor wretch cried. "We will see later!"

On the next day, the *Shenandoah* anchored at the rocky peak of Tristan da Cunha, in 10° Lon. W., 37° 6' S. Lat.

Plentifully supplied with general stores, the plunder of the prey, still, fresh provisions and water were needed. There was a fear of scurvy, the sailor's curse.

Allerton growled in disgust. "I would like to see our war flag once in a decent port. Are we afraid to show it?"

But, only the "Long Island Traitor" and Captain Waddell, now knew of the ultimate trend of a voyage doomed, to be signally destructive to American commerce, but, "barren in honor."

All the prisoners were landed on the lonely shores and a full supply of sheep, both live and slaughtered, was laid in, with water enough to turn either Southern cape.

And so far—not one of Waddell's most trusted officers knew "which Cape!"

On this twenty-mile island, under its peak eight thousand feet high, for five years from 1816 to 1821, a company of British artillery prevented the friends of Napoleon the Great from using the island as a refuge for the scheming would-be rescuers of the august prisoner of St. Helena.

The ignominy of not being allowed to land lest some letter might be left by the renegade, embittered "Jack Mason," who envied the fifty poor colonists who now watched over the six hundred cattle and eight hundred sheep making up their whole live stock.

Eighteen hundred miles away, lay the rock of Saint Helena,—destined later, to be the place of exile of the undaunted Boers.

Rocking idly, at anchor, the *Shenandoah* was carefully prepared for a long run.

Batteries, machinery, supplies, personnel, all were brought up to the highest efficiency.

Even Hugh Allerton grew to fear the fierce moods of the lonely traitor whose only friend now was the bottle, the invisible spirit of wine, the devil incarnate of rum!

The merry crew sported like children at play on shore, while Hiram Worth, a modern Eugene Aram, kept on board, hiding the dark secret of brooding murder, in his benumbed heart.

The cruiser's officers visited the old fort where Corporal Glass and two men held the island after Napole-

on's death down to 1829, and later, gathered twenty-seven isolated souls around them. One of the world's loneliest wastes!

"They can lift clean hands up to God even in their loneliness," cried Worth, in his agony. "For me, no memory of a past, no future, no rest, in heaven or hell. Even the falling flag of the Confederacy spurns the unpaid traitor who has sold his manhood's birthright for the red pottage of a criminal vengeance. But, this cup must be drained, to its dregs!"

Inaccessible Island, famous for the Stoltenhoff Brothers' desperate two years of Crusoe life, seemed to the ostracized gunner's mate to be a very Paradise, for there, the scorn of man could not mock his misery.

Walking in a clinging nimbus of shame, "Jack Mason" buried himself in his duties and little recked of his title of the dark Jonah of the lonely corsair.

A ship "without orders, "without a friendly port," a modern "Flying Dutchman," fleeing the wrath to come, and leaving only the red glare of devastation behind her, was the fierce *Shenandoah*!

The laugh and jest died away as, under the baleful flag, unchristened by honest battle, the armed avenger of lost Southern hopes, dashed on toward the Cape of Good Hope. The crew were all hoodwinked.

The Commander's official confidence was shared by no one.

The secret of their route, the mad future enterprise, was known but to the man whom that burly son of battle, Allerton, now, both feared and detested.

And still,—Fate shrouded the mystery of the renegade whaler's career.

Even Allerton knew nothing of Hiram Worth's life story, only his red craving for the ruin of some unknown enemy.

Two days out from the lonely island,—the *Adelaide*, of Baltimore, fell under the dark shadows of the *Shenandoah*.

When the ravaging was at its height and great damage had already ensued, chance proved the ownership



of Pendegrass, of Baltimore, a fierce Southron partisan. The ship was therefore, spared.

Ransoming the despoiled boat for a forty-thousand-dollar bond, the cruiser then left her crippled prey unburned.

Terrific storms announced the proximity of the dreaded Cape of Good Hope on December fourteenth, while, for four days, the lonely war ship battled with giant seas.

A magnificent sea boat, she rode out one immense roller which threatened to founder them, in its terrible crashing onset! The seamanship was magnificent.

The disheartened officers but faintly divined their stern captain's purpose.

In sheer self-defense, the commander had named "Jack Mason" as "Ocean Pilot," and a new hatred of the interloper, soon, sprang up among the bold sons of Dixie who had enlisted for honorable "battle," as well as mere predatory destruction.

By the approach of Christmas, the terrible storm had finally abated.

With no news from their Southern homes, overrun now by a million men, with only the dark presage of Lee's final crash before them, no star of hope gleaming in the skies of "Sixty-five," the master minds of the ship's company sadly played the hollow game of "Christmas festivities," at sea, on the inhospitable waves.

Months must elapse before they could hope for news of Lee's and Johnston's armies, or tidings of Hood's great raid into Tennessee, and, of the fortunes of the war-worn flag which blew out so defiantly over them in the teeth of the gales sent by the grim Spirit of Storms, from his lofty throne on Table Mountain.

On December 29th, the sullen monotony was broken by the barren capture of the bark *Delphine*, of Bangor, Maine, bound to Akyab, Arabia, in ballast, for coffee.

In a heavy sea, the astounded prisoners were all removed to the captor, the Captain's wife clinging to her bandbox and canary bird, two women and a sick child

being brought on board, risking their lives in the transit.

The cruel flames soon lit up the dreary waves behind, as the merciless cruiser staggered on, passing the dreaded Cape, on December thirtieth, and shaping a course for Australia, in suddenly arriving lovely weather.

A few days brought them to the Island of St. Paul.

The courtesies of the startled French Governor Ron-doney loaded the vessel with fresh fruits and all tropical supplies.

Mocked by the elegant homes of the French officers, "Jack Mason," a prisoner on the deck of the inglorious sea scourge, mooned over his coming vengeance, feeling now that he would never set foot on shore till he had achieved his final infamy of delivering up the whole floating property of his enemies at home to the cruel red flames.

Fish, dainties, wines and delicacies, refreshed the wearied crew.

With care Captain Waddell arranged his chronometers, which were only a few seconds out of the way, and then, he gleaned gloomy war news (kept private), from a Dutch ship just in from the Netherlands.

Bearing his desperate resolve in his own silent soul, the Captain sailed January third, encountering a terrific two-days' gale.

The *Nimrod*, an American ship sold to the English, was hailed on January sixth, and was reluctantly left, flying the British colors, in derision of the British-built avenger.

Captain Waddell experienced the same ill-fortunes in these barren waters as Semmes had on his useless raid into the lonely Indian Ocean.

Discontent, idleness and distrust grew apace, notwithstanding the severest discipline and frequent military exercises.

In the ninety days since leaving Madeira, no gallant action had inflamed the ardor of the motley ship's company.

The storms and rough handling called for repair and



docking the ship and the sullen officers were more than satisfied when on January 25th, 1865, the battered *Shenandoah* passed Port Philip Heads.

Standing into Hobson's Bay, the last of the ocean cruisers of Jefferson Davis, anchored at Sandridge, two miles from the great city of Melbourne, in Australia.

The wildest anxiety then reigned in the Australian metropolis over the non-arrival of an important overdue mail steamer, the *Royal Standard*, but, huge crowds gathered, at once, in a suddenly-born enthusiasm, to see the "Stars and Bars" defiantly floating in the soft Antipodean air.

The eager ship's company soon learned that no United States war vessel was in Australian waters.

Secret friends were all ready to arrange dockage and to aid the last forlorn hope Southern corvette.

In those ante-cable days, even the London news, fifty days old, told of the crumbling away of the fabric cemented by the blood of the "men in gray"—and, stern lips whispered "Cui bono," as they learned of the coming wrecking of the Confederacy, and Sherman's daring "march through Georgia."

While excursion boats laden with aristocrats, popular crowds, bands, flags and every possible present hovered around,—and, courtesies and balls and dinners were daily projected, Captain Waddell called Allerton and "Jack Mason" to his cabin.

"We have enemies as well as friends, here," he said. "There is a plot of the 'Federal sympathizers' to destroy the *Shenandoah* with torpedoes.

"Their merchant ships here have all scattered,—frightened off by Semmes' raid.

"I may meet a heavy Yankee gunboat by mere chance. There are many on the seas now.

"If so, I will fight her, *I must!* This ship shall earn her title to the war flag she carries, if we fall in with a cruiser.

"You, Allerton, must not leave the ship till we are safe in the dry dock.

"We will be protected there, by our English friends.

"I wish the *Shenandoah* to be put in the highest state

of efficiency. You will be charged with frustrating any cowardly attempt to blow us up.

"But, you, Mason," he said coldly, "will be needed every moment on special duty with me! If you need anything on shore, let me know. I have my own reasons to keep you from being the object of special curiosity ashore."

Hiram Worth was now utterly unrecognizable by any casual observer, in the "Jack Mason" of the *Shenandoah*.

His flowing dark beard, wild appearance, and neglected dress made him appear fully twenty years older than his twenty-nine summers would naturally indicate.

"I require nothing," he shortly said.

"There are crowds of men now offering to join us," gravely said Captain Waddell. "I will take on fifty good men here.—They will all need training. They must be secreted in the vessel till we sail. We will then be full-handed for our long run," concluded Waddell.

"To you two, I will entrust these men, who can not openly violate the neutrality law, for, I will not complicate England."

As he left, he whispered to the renegade: "Once in the Arctic, you can do, as you please—after you have shown me the enemy, your own destined victims!"

A ferocious joy filled the traitor's heart.

He went below and drank himself, for the first time, into a complete stupefaction.

CHAPTER XI.

THE SEA HAWK'S FLIGHT.

Hiram Worth was astounded at the uproarious welcome given to the dashing *Shenandoah* in the beautiful city on the Yarra-Yarra.

Railroad passes, flowers, gifts and invitations flowed in. It was a case of a social frenzy.

The crew, with few exceptions, were all given shore liberty and the officers were the lions of the hour. The magnificent city, the fairy growth of thirty years, fairly went wild over the daring sea raiders, whom the minority Northern sympathizers stigmatized as mere "marauders."

Whether the Southern-born men were patriots or not, "Jack Mason," gunner's mate and "Sea Pilot," could not determine.

Like the *Alabama*, the *Shenandoah* never entered a home port of the Confederacy to take on a true belligerent character, during her whole career.

Unlike her, she never was, even in Southern waters, for the *Alabama* had boldly sunk the *Hatteras*, within sound of the sunset gun at Galveston, daringly entering the theatre of naval action, and also, bravely maintaining her character as a war vessel, in the desperately hopeless fight to the death against the heavy *Kearsarge* off Cherbourg. And yet, both Semmes and Waddell were fearless men.

Worth knew that the Northern men joining "at sea" for mere pelf, were all scoundrels at heart and, he knew better that only one man on the *Shenandoah* could hope for no mercy, in case of a capture.

From dupe to traitor, there was no connection between the intrigues of the Coffin family and the cowardly burning of peaceful American ships by a regularly articulated American merchant marine officer.

He was not deceived by the special duty of making an enlarged pilot's chart of the Kuriles and the Okhotsk, Behring Sea, and the Arctic, for the solitary Captain Waddell.

Even the deserters from the captured Yankee ships were allowed to go on shore to revel, to write home letters and to pose as "warriors." He alone seemed to be an Ishmael!

Allerton was now acting Ordnance Officer, and the new rank separated the renegade from his tempter, who had an acting officer's rank, as a gentleman.

With a guard of twelve men, Allerton keenly watched night and day, to counteract any secret attempts to cripple the daring cruiser, or injure her machinery.

A heavy force of men were, at once, set at work upon the corsair, the ship was thoroughly examined and the expert machinists searched for every hidden flaw.

Seven thousand enthusiasts visited the "sea rover" on her first Sunday in the lovely Antipodal summer.

Captain Waddell was closeted with his secret agents, who had a bulky mail from London and also, from Bombay, where the non-arrival of the *Sea King* had created great alarm.

To deceive the United States authorities, the *Sea King* was posted as "missing" or "lost," under her own name, at Lloyds, in London.

"Hiram Worth," "the dead whaler," read with a gloomy satisfaction, the news from distracted America and, alone and sullen, reflected upon the saddened Christmas of his mother and relatives.

"Far better so!" he sighed. "They will bury me in their honest hearts, thinking me as lost in the waves of Funchal.

"They must never know the horror of my piracy, for, pirate I am, as surely as if the white skull and cross-bones flew over us on the black field of 'No quarter.'"

He had himself pulled the lock-string and put three loaded shells into the beautiful *Lizzie M. Stacy*, firing upon the dear old flag which had nurtured him.

"All is black before me now!" he growled.

"To them, comes no cheering, to Duncan, no morrow!" I am really dead, but moving in a living hell on earth!" He had begun to pay the price of his treason!

The words of his favorite poem came back to haunt him.

"I look along life's columned years
And see its riven fane."

The sad lament of the beautiful Adah Menken.

Denied even the chance of a spirited action, of sending the battle message of the shrieking shell across the wave, he—alone—save Waddell—knew that the *Shenandoah* would probably never fire a shot in honor. For the desperate cruise was now planned.

It all seemed cruel, puerile, childish, after all.

The fatuous blindness of the senile Gideon Welles,

who in all the twelve hundred armed vessels of the United States Navy could not find four, to station at Singapore, Melbourne, Hongkong, and Honolulu, even, after the erratic raid of Semmes.

The North—money crazed, was now enriching itself by the war! Patriotism was a trade!—Loyalty, a lucrative profession, and, the fifty years' coming shameful eclipse of the American merchant marine was due to the inert, purblind, Navy Department letting five ram-shackle caught-up Southern boats drive all our commerce from the seas. A marvel of official inefficiency. An infamy never explained!

In his secret conferences with Captain Waddell, Worth could see that the silent Commander feared some nearby trap.

"It is simply impossible that they should be so blind! We will quickly refit her, ready either to run or fight, for, I have a dangerous zone to cross.

"I am going up the Pacific half-way between San Francisco and Honolulu, and we will clear a wide swath.

"Mark me, my man, when you take this ship into the Kuriles,—if there is aught hostile waiting for us, there—I'll have you minced with knives! For you, alone, know the secret! My officers are all in ignorance—so,—if there is any leakage,—you alone can be the traitor! You'll be relieved of all duty, but, 'Sea Pilot,'—when we pass 30° North Latitude! You will live in the chart room. And, you and I will direct the vessel."

"Jack Mason," friendless and distrusted,—was touched by the mad devotion of the Southern lady in Melbourne who brought her jewels and savings to Captain Waddell—and offered her nine-year-old boy, as a midshipman.

"She has a flag over her, even if only the flag of half a country!" groaned Worth, as he saw the gallant Southern woman leave the ship with three cheers.

But, while the festivities went on—the ship was hauled into dock.

For ten days, without a moment's rest, night and day, men swarmed over her! There was money in hand,—

slyly sent on by Commander L. D. Bullock, the South's able naval agent in England.

Calking and painting went on,—the bottom was cleaned,—the engines were tuned up,—rigging reset,—the propeller was rebushed—and, all fresh war supplies loaded. The Northern sympathizers were powerless in Melbourne.

While stately banquets were held,—while Ballarat feted the heroes with a grand excursion—and the freedom of the town, and all the journals "slavered" in adulation—all was not smooth going even in these days of golden sunshine—this strange summer in winter in Australia!

The American Consul and a few local Federals were bitter and active,—and—the end of the war looked to be near.

Rifle in hand, Hiram Worth stood ready to fire—when the alarmed Governor sent a hundred armed police and Royal Artillerymen to "seize the ship," for "illegal enlistments."

Sword in hand,—calling his men to quarters,—the bold Captain Waddell refused to have his crippled ship searched!

He flatly refused, even, to muster his crew!

After a long wrangle, the Confederate boldly threatened to pay off his crew,—abandon his ship,—return to England,—with all his men, and then, claim the heaviest damages for "illegal seizure!" It was a desperate bluff.

The weak-kneed Governor "backed down," in Yankee parlance, and, at once, quashed the whole proceedings!

In triumph,—the whole personnel went, next day, to the great Ballarat ball given by Brayton,—a resident of New York, but, a rebel sympathizer!

The whole loveliness of Melbourne and Ballarat hung upon the bedecked Southern officers!

From this. on, drenched with wine—smothered in flowers—caressed by the voluptuous beauties of the southern Paris,—the *Shenandoah* officials were the kings of the hour!

A bitter reaction of jealous enemies and the local

beaux, brought on a terrific fight at a "Punch party," in a leading Melbourne Hotel!

The victorious Southrons went in triumph, later, to the theatre, in a body,—while the orchestra played "Dixie," in a frenzy of delight! The town went mad in delight!

In all this hubbub,—Worth,—ferocious in guise,—behind his bushy beard and streaming locks,—only toiled at his work and caressed the devil in the bottle—now, his "one familiar friend!"

But, the alarmed Waddell, hiding his fears even from his best officers, saw the narrow margin of safety!

The ship was quickly hauled out and the last repairs were carefully effected.

Fresh supplies were hurriedly loaded, and three hundred tons of the best coal taken in from the *John Frazer*—an English ship.

On February seventeenth,—sixty-five, the steamer *Great Britain*, brought funds, orders, and secret dispatches from London! The crew were half crazed in excitement.

Only the reserved Waddell knew of the "round robin" orders sent by the Crown all over the world, to all British fleets and English officials, to detain the illegally chartered *Sea King*.

With "brief adieu" and maimed ceremonies, the *Shenandoah* glided,—snake like,—out to sea,—leaving behind many a white bosom sorely shaken in the soft tumults of love! For, the women of Australia are as passionate as Venetians.

The Southern craze was still at its height—but, the ominous word *Tuscarora* had been bandied around!

Waddell well knew that the eight-inch Dahlgren shell guns would send their missiles ripping through the frail *Sea King's* sides, with a sickening crash!

He knew, too, that beyond one or two heavy non-descripts,—like the *Tennessee* and the altered *Merrimac*,—the Southerners had never obtained a single vessel fit to fight a respectable half hour's action at sea! And he decided wisely!

So it was again "legs, not arms," when the blue peter waved over the saucy "Stars and Bars" and, the *Shen-*

andoah, as a hungry sea hawk—drove seaward toward New Zealand!

The tenor of Waddell's secret orders—his private advices, were never divulged to any subordinate—but "Jack Mason," Waddell's despised secret adviser, alone, knew the dark secret of the sea hawk's hasty flight!

By his shameful treason—the Confederate had learned of the future passage of the *Reindeer* and her twelve scattered consorts—all creeping up to the Kuriles—and all ignorant of the torch wielding pursuer, soon to be the scourge of the lonely Pacific.

Allerton and Hiram Worth grinned, as they called out forty-five selected fighting men—culled from Australia's most desperate classes—from their hiding places—when the capital of Victoria faded away behind them.

Fourteen were hidden away in the hollow bowsprit,—twenty in empty water tanks—and, now, the crew, with other secret additions, was full, and a strong guard of veteran marines, kept up an iron discipline under the orders of the merciless Waddell!

Back in the fields of his fourteen years United States service,—the Captain with "Jack Mason" as "Mephistopheles" moved in a mysterious way his wonders to perform! The "Capuan dalliance" of Melbourne was soon forgotten in the "steel hand under the velvet glove"—and,—with a secret shudder,—many a man felt that nothing but Waddell's iron will would be their law—till the boat was either sunk by a Federal fighter,—or else, whelmed in some terrific storm!

For, all men knew that the "Table Round" of the Southern Chivalry was breaking up forever,—that the flag of thirteen States was fluttering slowly down to its eclipse at Appomattox, and, Father Ryan's noble lines were crystalizing in his noble heart!

"Furl that banner, for, 'tis weary!"

At Drummond's Island,—guided by Hiram Worth, now the secret master of the *Shenandoah*—the cruiser halted for a full supply of fruits and sweet water.

Horribly tattooed naked cannibals—paddled out from the island jewel—twenty miles in circumference—to

exchange fish, superb vegetables, and fruits,—for “rum and tobacco”,—those two gifts of civilization, which always precede the Bible!

It was a strange dinner party which Captain Waddell gave to the score of hideous chiefs whom “Jack Mason,” speaking their jargon, liberally plied with rum! “In vino veritas!”

In a few hours the *Shenandoah* was racing along like a dolphin—Hiram Worth standing on the bridge, with the excited Waddell! A golden secret had been learned!

Both explored the sea for any fugitive sail,—and the next day, they ran down the schooner *P. Fiert* of Honolulu,—safe under the Hawaiian flag.

For a “liberal consideration”—the Judas Captain located every passing American whaler, and then gave secret information which made Waddell rush his vessel along under the oil soaked coal!

The cruise had been lately “stale, flat and unprofitable,” so far—a failure—save the cheaply won “lionizing” by the doubtful aristocracy of Melbourne.

To make assurance doubly sure, Strong’s Island, five hundred miles away, was searched for the helpless whaler prey.

It was deserted—a dreamy ocean pearl, where Nature lavished every loveliness of fruit and flower, a beautiful spot, with but a few howling cannibals, in bower-like houses!

Divisions of boats, with strongly armed crews searched the bays—fearful lest some straggler should literally “go to pot!” Nothing there, only the lonely Paradise.

There were no tell-tale spars of whalers, lined out against the graceful fronds of the tropic palms,—their hulls gleaming in the pearl enriched waters of the coral atolls.

While the bewildered ship’s company wondered at this “Lutzow’s wild hunt,” not an officer dreaming of their final declination,—“Jack Mason” with a barrel of rum and a hamper of tobacco,—opened the heart of a huge native chief!

Then, when the tattooed devils had all paddled ashore,—like Captain Brand's tiger-like "Centipedes," the *Shenandoah* raced along—like a ravenous shark, for Ascension Island.

It was on April first of sixty-five—while Lee was fighting the last desperate battles of his life, that the Southern cruiser stopped her engines, in a dense fog,—before the five hundred foot crest line of the pearl of the South Pacific.

The crew were literally at sea! Captain Waddell had long restlessly haunted the bridge! When the fog lifted under a bright sun, a boat paddled by natives came alongside!

A drunken degraded Englishman of culture,—a human castaway, slowly climbed the gangway, eager for rum!

Conducted to Captain Waddell's cabin by "Jack Mason" he pointed to the sideboard when Waddell sternly asked, "*Where are the American whalers?*"

Gulping a tumbler of brandy, the tattooed human wreck stammered, "Four of them—up there—in a pretty little bay! The Captains are all ashore, on a debauch, with the native women!"

The sodden brute took the *Shenandoah* for an American man of war, as the Stars and Stripes were proudly flying at her mizzen peak! It was the moment of triumph!

Then Waddell, turning pale, rang a bell, and whispered a few words to the officer of the deck.

The castaway's native wife and two half-breed children were trotting around the deck, while "Jack Mason" made the bargain of thirty dollars for the brute to pilot the *Shenandoah* safely into the river, where the four splendid Yankee whalers lay,—all now at the sea hawk's mercy!

In half an hour, with the men at quarters, the swift corsair anchored within a mile and a half of the four richly laden Yankee ships.

"Here's business!" gaily cried Hugh Allerton,—as he sent an eight-inch shell screaming over the helpless

vessels and then four armed boats with two officers in each, shot away toward the prey!

The *Shenandoah's* men broke out into wild cheering!

The drunken Englishman who had half forgotten his own mother tongue, was frightened almost to madness, as the grim Confederate flags, then, went up to the three mast heads, and the field music wildly struck up, "Dixie's Land!"

"What is this?" the castaway babbled.

"The Confederate States war steamer—*Shenandoah!*" sternly said Captain Waddell, now in his full uniform.

Under a guard, the frightened pilot betrayed all his secrets to Jack Mason as the boats came back with the first and second mates of each of the whaler prizes!

These bewildered men were separated and sternly examined, while, at four o'clock,—the four Captains, captured after a running chase, trying to regain the shore, were ushered, under a marine guard, into Captain Waddell's presence.

"Jack Mason's" first hour of guilty triumph was in cross-examining the sore headed revellers as to the location of the whole South fleet of American whalers.

In half an hour, the ship's crew, frantic with delight, knew that the *Edward Cary*, of San Francisco,—the *Hector*, of New Bedford,—the *Pearl*, of New London, and the *Harvest*, of Honolulu, were in their power.

Loaded with valuable plunder and trading goods,—filled with every supply and dainty,—the four ships offered a carnival of loot to the delighted captors! They had been carefully fitted out for three years' cruises.

Two days later,—when the crews had all been removed—and three of the ships had been stripped, the helpless prisoners, camped on shore, under guard, saw the natives swarm as plunderers over the doomed vessels! It was no waste of valuables.

For, the *Shenandoah* could not hold all the splendid booty!

After a full supply was left for the marooned captives—a sadly splendid spectacle was afforded in the burning of the three staunch new Yankee whalers.

"Cowardly, brutal, useless," growled Allerton—as the red flames lighted up the crystal river for miles!

Howling cannibals, crazed with rum—brought their handsomest women as offerings—while they revelled in luxuries never to be repeated, in the history of legalized piracy.

The fourth whaler was then hauled alongside the corsair—and slowly stripped—while the men—in strong parties—"enjoyed themselves" on shore in the cannibal Paradise—the natives doing all the work,—for their own "unearned increment."

The officers examined a fine old square stone fort—a relic of the wild buccaneers—while the great Cannibal King came, in state, to visit the commander of all that was left of the Confederate States Navy at sea,—then flying the flag of the Southern Cross, save the defiant *Stonewall*.

A fat old monster, smeared with oil—guarded by brutes armed with stone headed war clubs and great double handed shark toothed swords—was the potentate, who, with his English interpreter, soon became crazed with Waddell's superb Madeira wines and the choice beverages stolen from the prizes.

On shore, feasts of raw dog meat (in lieu of fat "missionary"), and trading rum, "ad libitum," rejoiced the tattooed devils who welcomed the "victors" just released from the arms of the Melbourne sirens!

"Goriva," a vile native drink, crazed the crew of the *Shenandoah*, who had lowered themselves to the level of the savage, by the theft and incendiarism which had no shadow now of necessity or even any military excuse!

It was on the thirteenth day of April (after the surrender of the heart-broken General Lee), that the splendid ship *Harvest* was given up to the red flames, at last.

Having left arms and every needful surplus of supplies for the abandoned whalers, robbed of their last dollar in ships and cargoes, the *Shenandoah* grimly stood out of the harbor, followed by the curses of over three hundred destitute and helpless Northern men,

left in a savage Paradise to watch the degraded cannibals diving for the iron and bolts of the splendid offerings to the fire fiend!

Shocked by the unnecessary vandalism, the better men of the *Shenandoah's* crew guarded a grim silence, while the mass slowly recovered from their sly debauch on the secreted wines and liquors of the four doomed whalers.

Sullen and fierce-eyed,—Hiram Worth drank himself stupid while the ship drove along, no one knew or cared whither, as long as blue water hid the shame which they left behind them!

CHAPTER XII.

THE DOOM OF THE "REINDEER."

A dull voyage in the middle Pacific was followed by a terrific tempest on April 16, which drove the ship nearly two hundred miles from the course secretly marked out by Captain Waddell and the now anxious traitor Hiram Worth.

Every man on the corsair felt as the May days came on, that the Civil War had probably collapsed.

For, all knew now, that Sherman had cut his way to the sea, and that Grant was all ready in March to hurl two hundred thousand well equipped men against Lee's forty thousand half starved veterans.

"To what use all this vain destruction?" urged some of the younger officers, gallant men and true.

"It may lead us all to the rope!" cried one.

On,—a spirit of destruction,—onward ever,—the swift ship drove northward in the mid ocean, and while the ship's company split up in sullen little cabals, "Jack Mason," over his charts (now completed), whispered his secret directions to the silent Commander.

By May twentieth, heavy clothing had been served out to all, and the superb panorama of Polynesian seas had been forgotten as snow fell on the decks of the cruiser.

All the splendid Arctic outfits of the whalers had been saved, and a conviction of some mad coming enterprise forced itself on all the officers and men, when without signalling another prize or victim, the war vessel drove past the north end of Yezo. On past Japan toward the frozen North!

"Are we fleeing the wrath or, *has he gone mad?*" mused an officer, as Waddell redoubled the drills and discipline of his morally shaken followers in these Japanese waters.

Every luxury had been heaped on the men, the ship having been loaded down to the bulwarks with the choicest spoil of the Eden ruled by the hideous cannibals.

"Far enough North now!" boldly said Hiram Worth, whetting his appetite for revenge, as he, one day, faced Waddell.

They had not found the missing whalers of Starbuck's fleet, though the ship had cut through the Japanese current setting toward America.

Every vigilance had been observed to prevent even a trading schooner or sealer from escaping in the mist with the news of the formidable enemy.

The gun-ports were all closed and all the appearance of an American revenue cutter or Arctic patrol boat was given to the merciless sea rover.

Several days of cautious search caused the Captain to adopt Worth's last desperate plan.

"Stand up to the Kuriles! Anchor the ship a few miles from Kussaroff's station! Let me go in with a boat's crew, asking aid for a whaler short of provisions! Give me money. Kussaroff will not recognize me now. But, with a good bribe, I can easily find out where the *Reindeer* is! And, the fleet will follow her.

"Should the *Favorite* come out to examine us, she could be captured and detained.

"But, I will have located the *Reindeer* and we can trap all the rest of the fleet!

"I will tell Kussaroff that I have three bags of mail for Captain Starbuck, on our boat just up from Honolulu, and, some medical supplies also! I will give him

the name of a ship that I know is tied up, now, in New Bedford!"

Such was the sly plan of "Jack Mason," who reminded Captain Waddell that his own disguise was now impregnable and that, with his ten years knowledge of the Arctic, he could easily allay all of the adroit Russian's suspicions.

"I will buy all the provisions I can. I'll have the natives bring them out in their canoes, and, of course, Kussaroff will give me news of where the fleet is, for, we would naturally seek other supplies from them.

"I'll tell him that ours were damaged by a heavy typhoon. You know all American whalers in the north, exchange men, food and supplies, when the call for help is made. And, also, all in sight, gather quickly when the American flag, Union down, is hoisted at each masthead of a whaler in distress, followed by a gun."

"That's a valuable suggestion, Mason," said the grim Captain. "Go, and fetch me Ordnance Officer Allerton."

Ten minutes later, the Commander had given his qualified assent to Hiram Worth's plans.

"I'll not mince matters, Mason," he said. "I am not justified in trusting you, in view of the way you came to us. I have a work to do here in the Arctic! One that will make the name of the *Shenandoah* live forever!

"I need both you men to board our prizes, as I wish to conceal certain possibilities, from my commissioned officers, until our whole work is done.

"A swift vessel might run up here from San Francisco, in fifteen days. There is now a transcontinental telegraph. Newspapers, with the telegraphed news of the final wreck of the Confederacy might be found on board of any one of these whalers, or, on one that we may later run into. It would make a riot on board!

"They all bring great stores of newspapers and magazines for the general fleet. So, I'm going to use you two men as boarding officers. Every newspaper must be at once destroyed. Hearsay is nothing! I do not

wish to see a journal with any news of the crash of the Southern government.

"So, I can continue our warfare until I get final *official news*. My crew and officers might murmur! This secret work I will leave to Allerton.

"To you, Mason, will be given the task of pilotage, and inspecting all the prizes, verifying and questioning all men before they come on the *Shenandoah*.

"Now, you two men must not separate. I give you fair notice, Mason, that at the first sign of foul play, Allerton will shoot you down like a dog!" It was a grim warning!

"Outside of that, you can do as you please. I wish all the valuable furs and ivory, and all needed supplies preserved, for removal. I must provide for my crew's pay.

"The rest, with the ships, all goes to Davy Jones' Locker."

"This is only fair," growled Hiram Worth. "I did not pretend to join you through patriotism. You've paid me nothing but an advance, through Allerton. I'll return that to him, for, I wish no money reward. I've some money of my own! So, you can not jeer me with taking a bribe. As for my keep, I have earned it!"

"All right," coldly said Waddell, "I'll run into Shimu Shiru Island, to-morrow, before daybreak.

"Casting you and Allerton loose with six men in the whale boat, you can drift in by the little settlement. I'll have a thousand dollars in Yankee currency in Allerton's hands.

"All your outfit will be dressed in the captured whaler's Arctic clothing. Arrange for some food, as you say Kussaroff has a depot of reserve stores.

"Let the natives come out with it, and I'll show the point for them to deposit it. They must not see our armament."

In a drizzling snow storm, in the gray of dawn the next day, the two men with their crew neared the largest of the three Japanese Islands of the group of twenty-two volcanic wastes, the haunt only of foxes, wolves, seals, beavers, bears and sea otters.

But, what priceless royal furs were here taken annually by the three hundred poor wretches scattered over the four thousand square miles of the whole group. Empresses craved these hard won spoils.

Ten years later, the Russians adroitly exchanged these nineteen islets for the Japanese title to one-half of the magnificent Saghalien, whose coal mines, alone, are worth fifty millions of dollars to-day! Wise and crafty Russians! The other half was theirs!

In a solid double log mansion, with walls twenty-four inches thick, Vassili Kussaroff dwelt gaily here on Shimu Shiru, with a Cossack guard, a half dozen wild hearted convict beauties from Vladivostock, and enjoying every luxury, though his *Revue des Deux Mondes*, and Petersburg journals, came by the annual fur ship, as a whole year's mail at once.

A crafty secret Russian agent, busy in hoodwinking the Japanese into the Saghalien swindle, Kussaroff was allowed to fill his pockets as he chose.

Tchusima and the Thousand Islands, were of no real use to Russia, but the chain called the "Kuriles" (smoke islands), by the Russians, from the volcanoes, was a superb fur supply group for the needy Japanese, as fond of fine furs as the luxurious Chinese.

The American pirate schooners were already gathering enormous numbers of fur seals along the chain, but, this year,—Vassili Kussaroff had secured all himself to be handled through Jonas Starbuck, and the *Reindeer*, with the help of the half pirate *Favorite*, Kussaroff's schooner flying the American flag to divert the attention of the Russian Naval officers from his own wholesale looting and smuggling.

When the *Shenandoah* was out of sight around the bend,—her smoke stack being lowered, and the decks all deserted, the two armed chums boldly landed where the curling smoke announced Kussaroff's sybaritic Arctic home. Surrounded by a dozen store houses, and fifty squalid native huts, he was well protected.

Slowly waked up, the great man, at last, appeared clad in a soft robe of priceless sea otter, standing on a

floor carpeted with fur seal skins. A frightened beauty peeped through a half-closed door.

Tea, "vodki," and a smoking breakfast, soon followed Hiram Worth's announcement that he,—"Jack Mason," third mate of the whaler, *Narwhal*, of New Bedford,—needed supplies, and, was also charged with three bags of mail for the *Reindeer*.

Allerton wondered at Kussaroff's perfect English.

But, the golden bearded Russian led the disguised Hiram Worth a few steps away.

With a little cautious fencing, Worth saw that his one time friend was deceived by his own beard and disguise and also, alas, by the ravages of drink. He was not recognized!

"The *Albatross* came into Honolulu, with supplies for old Jonas," said "Jack Mason." "She had a splintered rudder and she needs an extended overhauling.

"So, we took on the mail and I am to join Starbuck, with the orders from his home people."

Worth's heart bounded in a fierce glee, when Kussaroff whispered, "You'll find the *Reindeer* and the *Favorite*, both up at Cape Shestakoff, in the Ochotsk Sea. Our Tchucktches report that all the school of right whales is in there now, driven in by a great storm and the ice fields. The other twelve Yankee whalers of the New Bedford lot, are in a line near Cape Omgon, while there is a big general fleet, in Anadyr Bay around Behring Strait and, some more are out in the Arctic."

A few queries satisfied Kussaroff of the "devotion" of the strange visitor to Jonas Starbuck.

"I suppose that you are going to replace poor Hiram Worth, who was murdered at the Canary Islands," he sadly said. "He was a fine fellow!"

Over the hot "vodki" toddy, the American traitor heard his own last eulogy. "There was a man, a brave fellow! Molodetz!"

In half an hour, the twenty tons of rough supplies were all paid for and ordered down to a point, five miles below the cove.

"Don't try to bring your ship near here! The rocks are all unmapped," said Kussaroff. "With this wind

you can get to Cape Shestakoff in four days, and, Starbuck has a year's extra provisions for three ships on his fleet of thirteen ships. He can fit you out."

They found Allerton flirting with an ex-prima donna of Moscow, a woman sent away for murdering a lover, and also trying to confer with a gypsy girl who had poisoned an old banker at home.

Fast and furious was the fun as the thousand dollars changed hands, and Kussaroff gave Allerton a "sea pass" for the American vessel *Narwhal* to enter the Okhotsk and join the *Reindeer* at Cape Shestakoff.

A scrawl to his partner Jonas Starbuck, ended the transaction with the Russian and then, with a dozen bottles of good brandy, the two spies hastened down the beach to where the men were now ready, summoned from the native huts.

Hoisting their boat's sail, the exultant spies skimmed rapidly away, racing around the point as they saw the crowding natives loading their canoes with the bread boxes, coffee and sugar, cases of bacon, and canned goods, slyly sold to Kussaroff by Starbuck, in exchange for ten thousand dollars' worth of superb raw furs.

Before noon, the boats of the *Shenandoah* had unloaded the twenty canoes, full of food, the purchase of which had blinded the greedy Russian scoundrel.

And then, with all her sails set, the corsair drove away northwest, not daring to unbank her fires till night had hid the shores of the sterile island.

But the "war ship" soon throbbed with the speed of the over driven engines, when Captain Waddell had raised up the smoke stack, and listened to the detailed report of the two adventurers. The sea hawk sought her hemmed-in prey!

With the chart before him, and Hiram Worth at his side, after dismissing Hugh Allerton, the veteran Captain laid out his course to reach Cape Shestakoff, in three days.

The whole ship's company now sullenly divined the work of shame before them. It was a deed without a name!

For, north of fifty degrees, running into the Ochotsk

a few ex-whalers on board had spread the news of their probable purpose. Old sailors can not be long deceived!

It was the American deserters who enlightened the almost mutinous officers of the cruiser, hitherto denied all their commander's confidence.

"Have you told me all?" sternly said Waddell. "I would like to trust you, Mason."

Then, the last Long Island traitor slowly said, "I told you that I only wanted to meet one man! I hold a secret which might make your whole crew rebel, and openly mutiny.

"A swift Russian corvette has passed here under full steam from San Francisco, via Sitka. She is making for Nicolaievsk direct, to land at the mouth of the Amoor. You know that the Russians have openly sided with the Federals?"

"Yes, damn them!" cried Waddell, in a sudden rage.

"They sent a heavy fleet to San Francisco, and one also, to New York, with orders to report to President Lincoln, if England and France recognized the Confederacy. That sealed our doom! I wish I could sink a Russian ship or two.

"In this letter from Kussaroff to Jonas Starbuck, he tells him news, which, if I divulged it, would cause your whole ship's company to refuse to obey your further orders as Commander of a Southern war vessel. Your flag has gone down *forever, but, in honor!*"

"Does Allerton know this?" hoarsely cried Waddell, staggering to a sideboard and draining a glass of brandy.

"No!" proudly cried Worth. "You see now that you can trust to a Yankee traitor!

"Kussaroff whispered the news secretly to me, for, the Russian Commander was ordered only to inform the Governors of Nicolaievsk and of the——"

"Stop!" cried the Confederate Captain, "I must not know any more. Where is the letter?"

"Here! Sealed!" said "Jack Mason," handing it over.

Lighting a match, Waddell then lit his ship's candle, and quickly burned the letter.

"Now, Mason," he said, "anything more?"

"Yes!" boldly cried the renegade. "The man whom I seek, is in command of the Yankee schooner *Favorite*, now gathering furs at Yamsk, fifty miles from Cape Shestakoff, where Starbuck waits for a fifty thousand dollar cargo of furs bought for the trading rum which Kussaroff and Starbuck, and others of the gang, own."

"I see what you want," grimly said the Captain.

"Lay me first alongside the *Reindeer*. I'll put a prize crew on her.

"Then you, with Allerton, can board the *Favorite*.

"I want the furs! You want to meet your man!"

"It will not be a long interview!" snarled Hiram Worth, with all the hatred of hell gleaming in his eyes.

"After that, we must at once catch the whalers at Cape Omgon. No news must reach the rest of the Arctic fleet," cried Waddell.

"I understand," said the excited renegade, thirsting now for one glance at his hated enemy.

Jasper Coffin, the man who had stolen his bride, was now the successor of the discarded lover, in Jonas Starbuck's scheme of robbing the stockholders of the Cold Spring Whaling Company.

"Remain hidden in the chart room. You will have all your meals there," said Waddell. "Allerton will give you any arms that you need, for self defense," he significantly said.

Three days later, on a cold windy afternoon, the rocky promontory of Cape Shestakoff was dimly described.

When columns of black smoke were seen rising above a heavy sparred ship, lying at anchor, Hiram Worth left the deck, with a sickening shudder. He recognized his old ship!

"They are trying out blubber on the *Reindeer*, Captain," said the agitated renegade. "It is the old boat! Better let Allerton and a picked boat's crew of your Southern men get ready to board her. I will take the

Favorite to-morrow. They might recognize me on the *Reindeer!*"

With his glasses at his eyes, Jonas Starbuck stood far distant, gazing at the swift Confederate cruiser, now three miles away, but racing towards him at full speed.

He laughed, full of the success of every plan, as he thought, of his valid Russian sea pass to visit the Bay of Ochotsk. He was in a most jubilant mood.

With seven sperm whales to the good, forty thousand pounds of whalebone safe on the shore, and fifty thousand dollars' worth of choice furs on board, he felt easy.

"There's a hundred thousand to divide between Jasper Coffin and myself. We can square the old man."

"It was not an unmitigated disaster, after all, the death of Hiram Worth. Poor boy! I've no doubt Rolletta Armstrong's been taking on dreadful."

"I don't like the looks of this here boat, Cap'en," sullenly said old Bill Tarbox, as the cruiser, with all her gun ports now open, came racing along with a sinister velocity, and rounded to, within eight hundred yards. Her war rig was but too evident!

The Russian flag was flying at the mizzen peaks, and on the quarter deck of the *Shenandoah*, Waddell was giving Allerton his last orders. They were imperative.

"Secure the officers instantly! Put a sentinel within and without the cabin, so that no valuables can be destroyed. Let Lieutenant Braxton hold the ship! You are to bring all the officers back in your boat, at once. Braxton has all his own orders, already. He knows his duty!"

"Stay here, Bill," cried Jonas Starbuck, as two armed boats swiftly approached the whaler, whose men now clustered around the decks in helpless anxiety.

"You speak Russian pretty well! Tell 'em that I have a letter of protection from the Russian agent and Consul at the Kuriles, Colonel Kussaroff!" He fancied the stranger to be a Muscovite cruiser, and only feared a polite blackmail.

"All right!" growled Tarbox, gazing at the fur

coated boat's crews, and the gleaming muskets. All dreaded only the Czar!

As Paul Braxton, sword in hand, followed by Allerton and a dozen armed men streamed up the gangway, the "Stars and Bars" rose menacingly to the main peak of the corsair, and then an eight-inch shell, whistling by, wakened the echoes of the icy bay, the boom of this gun echoing in the hollow caverns of the sterile and lonely promontory.

"My God, what's this?" groaned Captain Starbuck, as Allerton clapped a loaded revolver to his head.

"You are a prize to the Confederate States war steamer *Shenandoah*!" yelled Lieutenant Braxton. "Haul down your flag and muster your men."

"Well, I'll be damned," growled Bill Tarbox, in blank surprise.

"Do it yourself!" bravely retorted the game old Long Islander. Jonas Starbuck was no coward.

"Where, in hell, did you come from?" he growled.

Collared and hustled into the boat by Allerton, the three officers of the doomed *Reindeer* were soon transported to the saucy *Shenandoah*.

"What furs and bone have you on shore here?" demanded the grim Waddell, as he knew the hideous campaign of the Arctic had happily opened when the *Reindeer's* flag slowly fluttered down.

The three officers of the *Reindeer* all stood mute. Hansbrough and Jessup were glaring a last defiance. Old Jonas was a defiant bull of Bashan.

"Where is the *Favorite*?" sternly said the enraged Waddell.

Not a sound was heard.

"Allerton," fiercely said Captain Waddell, "lock these men up under guard! Keep a strict watch. Let them have no food or water—nothing, till they all find their tongues!"

An hour later, threats of "bread and water" for the whole crew, brought out the fact that five men were guarding the valuable whalebone on shore, and the try fires had all been extinguished and the two whales alongside the *Reindeer* all cut loose.

Before dawn, after the seizure of the now priceless bone, the *Shenandoah* stood across the wintry bay to Yamsk.

A guard of thirty men was left to secure the whale-bone and to force the captured crew to load it and then work the *Reindeer*, filled with a rich spoil of infamy, over the bay to the north east shore.

Threats of gagging enforced silence among the captured officers, but, in Jonas Starbuck's mind a torturing agony now reigned.

"Who has betrayed us?" he ceaselessly queried.

"Has Kussaroff sold us out? Damned scoundrel! *He did!* For, no one but poor Hiram Worth knew, and he, God rest his soul! has been seven long months dead.

"And yet, the Russians, all, are our friends. What fiend of hell led this pirate up here?"

Only a few bulkheads separated the haggard prisoners from a man who fiercely growled, "All ready, now," as he loaded two heavy Adams revolvers, and then, gazed at a keen harpoon and long hunting knife lying on his bed.

"To-morrow, *to-morrow!*" gasped Hiram Worth, and then, the devil from the bottomless pit came and ministered unto him!

Sleep came not to his haggard eyes, as the *Shenandoah* was driven along like some guilty thing.

From Allerton, Jack Mason had learned the names of the three officers and the whereabouts of Jasper Coffin.

One separate ignoble Yankee wretch, anxious for rum, and all the comforts of the cook's galley—had joined the *Shenandoah's* crew, and now eagerly vomited up his budget of Judas tidings. The name of this craven wretch, changed a dozen times before, is left to the eternal oblivion of infamy. It is in the naval records.

A dozen times, Worth, now but a mere human wolf, sought the deck.

He returned to the bottle, and sheer exhaustion

brought to him the last unhaunted sleep of his wretched life.

"Rouse up, rouse up!" hoarsely said Allerton, shaking him some six hours later. "The ship's beginning to slow down, already. The waist boat's crew is already called away. Sixteen men, eight, heavily armed. I and you, alone, go, in command! There's a fore and aft schooner flying the American flag, anchored under the lee of a little island, here. It's the *Favorite*!"

Grasping his arms, and concealing his bottle, the hairy faced renegade silently followed Allerton to the boat.

With no flag flying, the war steamer bore down on the little hundred ton schooner, on whose decks two or three men could be seen running about, as the *Shenandoah* stopped her engines.

"This is your affair! I wash my hands of the whole business. Give way!" cried Allerton as the boat sped along over the smooth icy water toward the helpless prey.

And then, with a bellowing roar, the shell gun woke again the echoes of the lonely waste of Arctic waters, and the unchristened battle flag of the *Shenandoah* was broken out again on the thin air!

CHAPTER XIII.

FLAMING WHALERS LIGHT UP THE SEA OF ICE.

"Where's your commander?" fiercely cried Hiram Worth, as he leaped on the deck of the *Favorite*, where two or three astounded American sailors stood amid a crowd of gaping natives.

"In his cabin!" quickly shouted one, as the maddened traitor levelled his pistol.

"Look out!" came a warning cry from the boat alongside. "He's throwing his papers overboard!"

Worth dashed to the cabin door.

It was firmly barricaded! A comfortable poop deck

had been built for the use of Kussaroff and his lady friends.

"Raise that spar and burst this door open!" yelled Worth,—as a half dozen men dropped their guns.

"*Surrender!*" hoarsely shouted the renegade as he leaped alone into the little cabin.

Sternly grappled, he shoved his pistol instantly against Jasper Coffin's breast and fired.

There was a heavy explosion, a sickening groan, and then, the stalwart Jasper came crashing down, "as cattle fall, across the broken chairs!"

"Leave me with this dying fool," sternly said the murderer, as Allerton's ringing voice cried, "Fall in here, as prisoners, every mother's son, or, else, shoot them down!"

The frightened natives madly plunged into the icy water, and struggled away to the shore, not a hundred yards distant. Then, nine Americans suddenly threw up their hands and stood trembling before the cocked rifles.

In the dingy cabin Hiram Worth bent over his dying enemy. It was the supreme moment of two lives!

Seizing the picture of a woman from the table, Worth pitilessly said, "Do you know me,—at last! You robbed me of her, you traitor, you liar!"

The dying man gasped, as a deep stain spread over his bosom. But his eyes gleamed in a deadly hatred!

"You, *you*," he faltered, "you cur; so you are the traitor. You led this sneaking pirate up here! Liar! You played your little hidden game, at Funchal! God will punish,—she will know—some day, you lowest, vilest wretch! You've murdered me! She never loved you; you tried to buy,—her foolish girlish heart! Ah! ——" His head fell back!

There was a long shuddering sigh, one heavy groan and, then, the cowardly assassin was left alone with the dead!

Stealing like a guilty thing out to the deck, he sat down on a coil of rope and then, buried his head in his hands.

The dying curse of those glazing eyes had reached his inmost soul.

"What's all this?" cried Allerton, rudely shaking him.

"He would not surrender!" babbled the dishevelled wretch, his hands now red with the blood of the dying man.

"If I were the Captain, you would swing at the yard arm for this, you damned hound!" hissed Allerton.

"Never speak to me again or I'll put a ball into your worthless carcass!"

Striding past him, Allerton went alone into the cabin.

Picking up the picture of the woman, which lay near a widening pool of blood, the Englishman thrust it in his breast.

"The curse of innocent blood is on us now!" he growled. "The run will end in shame. I'll keep this!"

Then calling in four men, he said, "Lay him on the bed!"

Covering the dead man's face, Hugh Allerton gathered up the scattered papers, opened a port and tossed the still smoking pistol out into the sea, and then he placed a sentry at the splintered door.

"All hands now!" he shouted. "Get up the anchor!"

Half an hour later, the *Favorite*, under jib and main-sail,—was warped alongside the *Shenandoah* and, duly anchored.

Disarmed by his mate, his head fallen back, Hiram Worth lay on the coiled cable, in a drunken stupor, his hand still clasping the empty bottle.

An hour later, Allerton led Captain Waddell into the cabin where the dead man lay in all the waxen splendor of his virile youth.

"A fine looking fellow. Looks the gentleman!" gravely said Waddell. "How did this happen?"

"Ask me nothing, sir," sadly said the brave Englishman.

"The man who did it is on the verge of tremens, or insanity! I've got him now, under guard, in the steerage."

"This must be quieted down," said the Confederate

Captain. "I will investigate! Meanwhile, take command yourself. Search the schooner! Make the men turn up all matters of value. We'll burn her to-night. Then, we will stand back and attend to the *Reindeer*. I must get that fleet at Cape Omgon!"

"The poor gentleman!" said Allerton.

"I'll send the surgeon's mate and the carpenter to you. Wrap the Yankee flag around him," sadly said the Commander, as he went sadly away.

"Secure all his papers and personal articles. See the cabin boy! We'll give him a Christian burial, at sea, here, before we burn the boat!"

Taking up a picture, Waddell started back.

It was Jasper Coffin as a Lieutenant of the United States Volunteer Navy. "He shall have a platoon and three volleys," murmured Waddell, "For, he has served the old flag!"

"Report when all is ready. This has been a bad business!" The curse of innocent blood rested on all now!

Before sunset, three ringing volleys sounded Jasper Coffin's last requiem as his body was committed to the deep, anchored down with two kedg anchors.

"English Hugh," bare headed, saw the body take its last plunge and, then, silently swore, "She shall know all yet!" For, there was a name and address written on the back of the picture. The name of Jasper Coffin's giddy wife!

"This man was foully murdered! The hell of life to his cowardly assassin is fitter than the Lethe of Death! He shall live to suffer!"

Stripped of twenty thousand dollars' worth of furs, a half hour later, red forked flames ran up the spars of the doomed vessel, whose naval stores had been all stove and scattered around.

Scuttled and flaming, the *Favorite* drifted away as the *Shenandoah* forged along to meet the *Reindeer*, now grandly standing across the bay.

Sending a line aboard when they met, the cruiser moved into shallow water and then, anchored for the night.

"Another cowardly robbery—another band of im-

poverished toilers of the sea, one more flaming wreck!" mused Allerton, standing alone by his favorite gun.

"The curse of God has come on us with this innocent blood! The 'Stars and Bars' will soon fade away forever from the flags of nations! This may be war, but, *it looks like plain piracy!*"

And so, the morning dawned to find Hiram Worth a half-demented outcast, stupefied with the surgeon's drugs and guarded from the relief of the bottle, which, alone, could now chase away the memory of the slowly glazing eyes of the man who had cursed him with his last breath,—triumphing, even in death.

A hundred eager men were stripping the *Reindeer* when Captain Waddell had closed his futile investigation.

"Let this tragedy be kept secret between you and I, Allerton," he said.

"No!" shouted the aroused Englishman. "Let it rest between an avenging God and, that wretch below! If he ever speaks to me, I'll cast him overboard!"

"We do not need him any more," sternly said Waddell. "His work as Pilot is done! He is the last Yankee traitor of this wretched war!"

The baptism of shame had descended at last upon the *Shenandoah*, a ship to which the gates of Honor were closed forever by the knowledge hidden in one man's guilty soul and the surmises of another!

For Lee's legions, Johnston's forces, Dick Taylor's troops, Maury's veterans at Mobile, even Mosby's grim guerillas had fired their last shot, over a month before!

The war-worn Confederate flags were all folded away forever!

Abraham Lincoln was even then lying in the tomb and the strong tread of a million returning victors shook the land, as the Grand Army passed in its last review, seeking home once more.

The South lay bleeding and helpless, a martyr to class pride and vain ambitions; the negro was left, a helpless Pandora's legacy, to a divided land, and the blood of hundreds of thousands of gallant victims drenched the

fields whose mournful memories to-day gild a past generation with the hero's meed of unrequited valor.

The prisoners of the *Reindeer* were allowed, as well as those of the *Favorite*, to bring all their kits and valuables on board the grim corsair, now flying no legal flag!

The officers of the doomed whaler were still confined, when the men were driven below as the red flames leaped heavenwards from the decks and rigging of the betrayed flagship of Zenas Coffin's whaling fleet.

It was a pitiable spectacle as the *Shenandoah* steamed swiftly away towards Cape Omgon!

The great ship was lined out in living fire on the darkening waters of the Ochotsk Sea, and a fortune was destroyed on the *Reindeer*.

The few Tchuktches and Siberians who saw the glare of the two burning vessels and heard the booming guns merely fancied that a war vessel of the "White Czar" had ruthlessly destroyed two sneaking Yankee whalers, for the claim of "mare clausem" was still diligently enforced in the Ochotsk, and even claimed, to cover Behring Sea.

The astute Yankee Secretary of State Seward was already in negotiation for the six hundred thousand square miles of Alaska, Alexander II. being glad to fulfill the wise admonition of Peter the Great—"to hold no territory across the sea, for Russia."

For seven million dollars, in gold, Seward bought a realm destined to return in fisheries, gold, furs and indirect gains, several hundreds of millions to our people.

But, the Confederate flag flew in triumph in the Ochotsk, the stormy Behring Sea, the wild Arctic Ocean, and along Alaska's shores, three years before Uncle Sam's victorious banner was first raised at Sitka in '68.

The Stars and Bars were carried twice around the world by Semmes and Waddell, and flew defiantly from Cape Horn and the Cape of Good Hope to the Arctic.

The *Shenandoah's* shotted guns were turned on sinking American ships in these waters, long after Jefferson Davis was a manacled prisoner in Fortress Monroe.

Standing alone on his quarter deck, Captain Waddell mused over the situation of "Jack Mason," the miserable murderer of the handsome young ex-naval officer.

But, for a serious doubt as to the renegade's sanity, and the lack of ocular proof of the murder, the indignant Confederate Commander would have at once hung Worth to the yard arm. For, James Iredell Waddell was a man of honor!

And yet, with his eyes strained towards Cape Omgon, the isolated Captain, the last war commander of the defunct Confederacy, dared not summon a court of his officers to judge Hiram Worth, for a capital offence.

"He must never be trusted with arms, again!" mused Waddell. "His mind is wandering. And, he is a sly brute!"

Fearful of "Jack Mason's" babbling the story learned of the Russian cruiser, the Captain now called before him Allerton and his Chief Surgeon.

He directed Worth to be sent down to the sick bay and used there as an attendant in the ship's hospital.

"Keep him closely watched, give him nervines in his food to prevent the delirium tremens, and, let him talk to no one! His mind is affected by drink," said Waddell. "I will keep him below till our voyage ends. Let him have an hour's daily exercise on deck, under charge of two men. He must speak to no prisoner and, the crew must avoid him. He is dangerous now!"

To Allerton, the Captain gave the charge of all Hiram Worth's effects.

"All the personal articles of this dead Lieutenant Jasper Coffin," sadly said Waddell, "you will preserve and carefully pack up. Keep these two pictures together, for the addresses are written on the back. I will forward that poor fellow's things home and you shall write a letter giving a softened relation of his death. He seems to have been a man of some consequence at home."

The luxury of Jasper Coffin's private appointments amazed the bluff English gunner.

Even Captain Waddell was astonished at the costly

comforts of some of the cabins in the other captured vessels.

Pianos, organs, libraries, ornaments, all showed that the Yankee skippers indulged refined tastes, especially, when their wives sailed with them, an olden custom.

Lieutenant Paul Braxton had forced the gruff Bill Tarbox to bring off the valuables of the defiant officers of the *Reindeer*, who were released at daybreak when the blazing wreck of their own ship was out of sight.

Not a word could be forced out of the frantic Jonas Starbuck during the day of the run over to Cape Omgon.

"You've made me a beggar, so kill me, now—you damned cowards," roared Jabez, aware that his whalebone and furs as well as the ivory were the spoil of an enemy who seemed to have dropped from the clouds!

A bitter disappointment awaited the pursuing corsair at the rocky cape on the west shore of Kamschatka. No other whalers were visible!

But, gold had loosened the tongue of the oily Yankee rascal taken on the *Reindeer*, who now replaced Hiram Worth as spy and informer.

Whiskey made his disclosures an easy matter.


Captain Waddell was overjoyed to know that the northern Arctic whaling fleet as yet knew nothing of the closing of the war.

"I can still act in good faith," he mused, as the new traitor was sent ashore with a boat, under a picked guard, with five kegs of whiskey, and soon gained the news from the few shore natives that the twelve other vessels of the fleet had started for Amphitrite Straits, following the enormous schools of right whales now driving eastward under a heavy gale.

The letters left there for Captain Starbuck were easily handed over for a douceur of tobacco and firewater.

They told of the action on Starbuck's discretionary orders.

"We will follow the whales," wrote the Captain of the *Abigail*, of New Bedford, "and, you will hear of us at Amphitrite Straits, where we will leave later letters for you."



So, squaring southeast, in 165° East Lon. 55° N. Lat., the *Shenandoah* turned back on that run which had taken her from Greenwich over all the eastern world, curving down to 40° South Latitude, half-way round the world, without ever sighting any one of Uncle Sam's twelve hundred idle war ships, which were now packed as close as herrings, from the mouth of the Rio Grande to Fortress Monroe.

The officers of the Pacific Squadron were engaged in "hops" and "dinners" with the San Francisco belles, and those of the Asiatic Squadron, with "dinners" and "hops" with the belles of Hong Kong, and all these ships were usually anchored within pistol shot of the bar rooms. No wonder that old Grandfather Welles lost so few of his ships!

He was the blameless Noah of an overloaded ark!

Had either Bullock, Semmes or Buchanan, Waddell or Maffitt been the Secretary of the United States Navy, the Confederate "scourges" would have had but a brief career!

But, Father Welles dozed and wrote archaic reports, while Semmes and Waddell burned and plundered in a sweet security.

Some later generation will strip the pinchbeck laurels from the brows of many of our civil war heroes, and Welles should be relegated to the calm obscurity of all the other senile official grandmothers.

In a blinding snow storm towards the end of May, the *Shenandoah* searched Amphitrite Straits, soon finding the expected letters and then steaming along under the eastern shadows of the Kamschatkan mountains, encountering huge fields of ice, but, no merchantmen, or whalers.

"Sail ho!" brought all hands to quarters, at last, when the *Abigail* was found alone, pinched between two great ice floes. The first of the new group of victims!

Running up to her prey under the Russian flag,—the cruiser easily took the doomed ship, which proved to be full of most valuable stores. These captures gave Waddell supplies for his last amazing run, as well as money.

While Starbuck, Hansbrough and Jessup cursed the "pirate," a hundred men were sent off to sack the rich prize.

Two hours later the drunken crew of the *Abigail* were all brought off in irons or tied like dogs by their rum-crazed captors. For, the *Abigail* was full of trading whisky!

The *Shenandoah* was run alongside and, for one whole night, the armed officers battled with their own motley crew, now drunken and beyond all usual control. It had been a dangerous capture!

The corsair was a pandemonium, till after safely stowing away twenty-five barrels of the whisky, the troublesome prize was given to the flames, exploding with a terrific report.

The sternest measures were then adopted by the enraged disciplinarian Waddell and the steamer turned toward Jonas Island, two hundred miles away, in the Ochotsk Sea.

Struggling from June first to fourth, in invincible fields of ice, Captain Waddell searched for the missing whaling fleet.

A new Judas, Thomas S. Manning, a Baltimorean renegade from San Francisco, the second mate of the *Abigail*, now joined the *Shenandoah's* "warrior crew," bringing over several others of the prisoners.

This loathsome traitor now directed the fierce search for the doomed fleet of helpless whalers.

He turned out in time to be as glib a liar as Ananias, and worthy of the crawling infamy which he voluntarily sought.

But, no fleet was found, while the *Shenandoah's* crew, heavily punished, were duly "jacked up" to their duty by their disgusted officers.

The voyage had at last assumed the moral baseness of a mere raid of wanton destruction.

On June thirteenth, sixty-five, the baffled sea scourge steamed away towards Behring's straits, passing the Copper Islands, with no additions to her roll of captures.

For nine days, still north,—ever north,—the half re-

bellious buccaneers (now sailing under a vanished flag), the sign of a defunct "de facto" government, steamed on towards Cape Thaddeus on the Asian coast.

Paul Braxton and Allerton watched over the sullen, now secretive Hiram Worth, in the cockpit of the *Shenandoah*.

The aversion of the crew for the murderer was almost a madness, and, hence, "Jack Mason" cowered for safety below decks. They only hated him for the useless slaughter of a resisting Yankee.

He was keenly watched by Tom Dunstan, the "second harpooner" of the *Reindeer*, a sick man, by whose bed the three officers of the Cold Spring ship often sat. A dim resemblance haunted the sick man.

"Reminds me of some one!" said Dunstan, "his voice makes me think of poor Hiram Worth!"

"That dirty tramp!" snorted Starbuck, "Why, they all call him 'Crazy Jack.' And, poor Worth is dead and gone!"

Not one of the *Reindeer's* crew knew the dark secret of the terrible murder of Jasper Coffin.

It was supposed that a rash resistance had cost him his life. Coffin's bravery was proverbial!

But, Hiram Worth, now sobered, with the whiskey out of his veins, only waited his chance to escape from the floating prison.

And, while his infamy weighed upon him, he still used every art to conceal his identity.

"Sent to Coventry" even by the "renegades" of the voyage, he became the butt of the "floating hell" which men called the *Shenandoah*.

Lingering near, he often overheard the conversations of the Cold Spring prisoners when they visited the sick harpooner.

And his disturbed mind wandered back often to the fair summer fields of Huntington, where two black-robed women still mourned him as dead.

But, neither in the millionaire's home, in Roletta Coffin's luxurious nest at Brooklyn, nor in the country houses of the rich syndicate, did any one fancy that the *Reindeer* was a burned and sunken wreck, her crew

the captives of an unlicensed pirate, and "handsome Jasper Coffin" lying at the bottom of the *Ochotsk* with two kedje anchors holding down his stiffened corpse.

Only dreams of gold lulled old Zenas Coffin,—only phantoms of pleasure dazzled the self-willed and exquisite Roletta, now on her upward social plane, and the syndicate with keen old Jabez Simpson figured up their expectant profits. For, prices were still on the rise.

"Pshaw!" mused Jabez. "I'll soon be rich as a Jew! The war is over. Danger is all past, and poor Hiram's ten thousand dollars will turn soon into thirty, and make Mary Worth a rich woman!

For, Bob Hilliard, outcast and debauchee, had soon thrown away all of Hiram Worth's loan and the coming foreclosure, in default of interest and taxes, was destined to make the saddened Mary Worth the richest widow in Huntington.

Seated together, the two women in black spoke often of Roletta Armstrong's unaccountable coldness.

Still living in luxury, but using only her maiden name,—the full-blown beauty ignored Jasper Coffin's claim as coldly as that of the betrayed Worth, whom all mourned as dead, taken off untimely. Her marriage was still a secret to the countryside.

"She'd no heart—never," energetically said Mehitable, "and, she'll mate yet with some rich man, and, he'll have a prize package on his hands!"

The fiction of the Brooklyn aunt's continued liberality covered the lavish provision of Zenas Coffin, who only lived now to see his son and heir return, bringing a fortune, coming bronzed with health, to rule over the great whaling syndicate.

So, gently murmuring "Soul! Soul! Thou hast much goods!" the old usurer never dreamed of the cowardly shot which had sent Jasper's heart's blood streaming over the cabin floor of the *Favorite*.

Not a soul on Long Island, no keen New Bedford money grabber ever dreamed that the fierce *Shenandoah* was now ravaging the Arctic, *two long months*

after the collapse of the Confederacy, or, that the commander had put himself deliberately out of the way of *officially* hearing of the fall of the Davis government!

Orders had been sent all over the world by England to apprehend and detain the *Shenandoah*,—of whose erratic career the first reliable news was now coming in.

But, since the speaking of the *P. Fiert*, of Honolulu, at Drummond's Island, thousands of miles away, no vessel had reached any telegraphic station with news of the corsair, now, an actual red-handed pirate, in law, if not in fact.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE "SHENANDOAH'S" DASH FOR ENGLAND.

The Ishmaelite of the sea, as loathsome as the cowering brute, was the unpunished murderer, the Pariah of the *Shenandoah* itself. The double revenge had been accomplished! Both Waddell and Hiram Worth had succeeded!

Hiram Worth had not found it so surpassing sweet and James Iredell Waddell, little dreamed, standing on his icy decks, that he would finish, unharmed, the wildest cruise of modern history,—that he would circumnavigate the globe in safety,—travel for years in Europe, as a "retired gentleman," and, then, return to San Francisco, for years, to be the petted high-class employé of the Pacific Mail Company, after wantonly destroying thirty-eight defenceless Northern ships, not one of which could fire a shot to defend the flag of their land!

Barren honors, and, yet, when he hauled down the last flag of the Confederacy, he could not fancy that he would "lag superfluous on the scene," to die in comfort, almost at the opening of the twentieth century. Such are the queer freaks of the high gods above us!

Thus, truth is stranger than the wildest fiction! Jef-

person Davis languished, two years, an innocent man, in a prison cell, while the Captain of the *Shenandoah* strutted in honor to the banquet tables of Europe. Such is life! The laurels wreathed the head of the pirate!

Excitement thrilled the jaded crew and the crowded prisoners on the *Shenandoah* on June 22, when, on the meridian of 180° Lon. E. & W. the overjoyed Waddell felt that he had chased the prey down in the Behring Sea.

Two great helpless whaling ships were in sight, and so, boldly under American colors, the corsair ran up to the *William Thompson*, the largest New Bedford whaler. Every sailing vessel in the Arctic was now at the mercy of the swift rebel steamer.

Dashing away, after putting a guard on the helpless ship, scurrying through heavy ice fields, the other ship, the *Euphrates*, of New Bedford, was quickly sacked and burned, a horrid spectacle in the sight of the astounded men of the English whaler, *Robert Town*, of Sydney.

The decks of the *Shenandoah* were now crowded to suffocation with the crews of four ships, as, on June twenty-fourth, the *Euphrates* was also deliberately burned, a mere useless vandalism, sickening even the now timid pirates.

Sleek insurance men in America would have shuddered on this long summer day with its twenty hours of pale Arctic sunshine, only two hours of faint darkness representing night,—to know that the lookout yelled from the masthead of the corsair: "Eight more sails in sight!" Waddell was frantic in his delight!

The quarry was run to bay at last in the congealed fields of "thick-ribbed ice."

"There they are, Captain," cried Tom Manning, the loathsome deserter, "all busied with whales!"

There was a fortune in the living prey in sight, five fortunes in the helpless boats, a richly laden fleet, rocking under the icy blasts with the invulnerable sea of silvery ice in the background, the pale blue icy waters

below them and the sharply drawn Asian mountains hovering in the apple green sky far to the west.

Howls of frantic delight greeted the news and the cheaply won "laurels" of the *Shenandoah* received new chaplets, on this day of doom.

The maddened crew were excited beyond all control when the *Milo*, of far away New Bedford, was caught, ransomed with a useless and never paid bond of forty thousand dollars, then, robbed, and, filled with the four crews on board, being hastily despatched to San Francisco, lest the men should starve to death! For, Waddell, now, feared a pirate's doom.

The signals of frantic alarm were now flying from all the imprisoned boats, two of which bravely tried to escape.

But, nearly three months after Lee's veterans laid down their colors in abject defeat, the *Shenandoah* opened with her merciless shell guns on the helpless *Sophie Thornton*, of unhappy New Bedford, also sending a heavy rifle fire of her 32-pounders, into the doomed *Josiah Swift*, of the same town.

When this cowardice had done its dreadful work, the *Swift* was searched for fifteen thousand dollars in cash, betrayed by that arch-liar, Manning.

It was not found, and it may be to-day at the bottom of Behring Sea, for, the helpless whalers were driven to madness by the cruel onslaught. The money for trading was in Mexican silver dollars.

The *Swift* was instantly burned, and a third whaler was chased into a closing ice field, where the *Shenandoah* dared not follow! Waddell, cruel and wary, was wise!

With yells of rage, the corsairs, now thirsty for blood as well as flames and plunder,—saw the fortification of the white Sea of Ice hide other vessels busied in calmly trying out their blubber.

The last prisoners were allowed to freely loot the *Sophie Thornton*, and, all the unhappy Yankees were then crowded on the *Milo*, the *Thornton* making a hideous bonfire, the next day.

And, in this "Pirate's Saturnalia," the *Susan Abigail*, a San Francisco trader, splendidly loaded and fitted

out, the richest of all the prizes, was looted and burned, a number of desperate recruits also joining the dishonored flag of the "Ship without a country!" The fever of wanton destruction burned in Waddell's breast.

Grovelling in abasement to get a stolen drink of rum,—Hiram Worth watched the closing sea of ice, behind the fleeing cruiser, lit up with the flames of the still blazing wrecks, as the fierce *Shenandoah* ran out of the icy seas, flooded with floating burning oil. The Aladdin's Lamp of Hell!

The corsair's crew were loaded with valuable loot, the wardrooms and cabins all stuffed with instruments and chronometers, priceless furs were bundled everywhere and liquors and wines filled the "pirate ship" from deck to keel.

In two days, the crew diverted themselves with slaying and salting down some eight score live hogs, taken from the captured vessel, for, well they knew no port was now legally open to the desperate men who sailed with invisible ropes, around their necks.

Devoid of warrant of law, custom, authority, or purpose,—this later half of the *Shenandoah's* cruise has no parallel in the world's maritime history. And, international law dropped it as a helpless problem, later.

But, freed from the accusing presence of the *Reindeer's* crew, now far out of sight,—Hiram Worth slyly stole liquors in the hospital—and, rubbing his hands, in glee, murmured, "I am getting even with my masters, with the Coffins, with all New England, and with all that circle which has betrayed me."

Fields of tremendous icebergs hemmed the corsair in, on June twenty-first, as they neared St. Lawrence's Island, knowing that the fleeing whalers were now spreading the news of the "Black Shark's" dreadful visit! The whole secret was unveiled!

The natives crowded around at St. Lawrence Island, exchanging superb furs for the superabundant loot of useful supplies,—guarded by their vast ice fields, where even the mercury freezes for two long months each year!

On the twenty-fifth, the *Shenandoah* ran out of the

line of the Arctic, saw two foreign whalers and purposely avoided them, but, on that evening, the *General Williams*, of New London, with abundant cash funds in specie, fell a prey to the cruiser. A welcome gift of Fate to the crew which never saw a regular pay day.

A fleet of thirty kayaks from Saint Lawrence Island lay huddled around the "sea devil," as the *General Williams* was doubly looted, and then cruelly, burned to swell the dark record!

The dark work ran on smoothly now!—On the twenty-sixth,—the *William C. Nye*, *Nimrod*, and, *Catherine*, of ill-fated New Bedford,—were all sacked and burned, giving one hundred and fifty more prisoners, helpless free American men to swell the one hundred already on the pirate.

An ignoble victory of "force majeure!"

Sailing away boldly, after five new ships in plain sight, the *Shenandoah*, left three blazing behind her, in a shameless triumph! These are the only dishonorable laurels of the Confederacy!

Winding in and out of the ice channels,—the snaky pirate soon ran up to a luckless whaler infested with smallpox, and then the "heroes" gave a wide berth to the stricken vessel.

But, with glee, the cruiser raced down on the *General Pike*, of New Bedford, ransoming her for thirty thousand dollars, and then, soon, loading her with three hundred penniless prisoners to make their way back to misery and poverty.

The next victim was the superb *Gypsey*, the most luxurious whaler on the ocean. A palatial vessel!

A drawing-room, a choice library, the finest wines, liquors and cigars, were found, with the whole crew drunk in their mutiny,—and the captors, also, became frantic with rum's delight.

The *Gypsey* was saved for a general treat! The Captain's wife (who usually sailed with him), was luckily not on the vessel.

After the wild debauch was over,—and the plunder ended,—furs, stores and valuables all were sent on

board the pirate and, then, the *Gypsey* disappeared in flames, amid ironical cheers.

Steaming after the *Isabel*, that unhappy ship was also soon taken.

The water tanks of the *Shenandoah* were now filled and after judicious thefts were accomplished, the torch was then applied!

The busy devils far down in hell laughed as, on June twenty-seventh,—to lull suspicion, the smokestack was lowered, all the fires put out and, under full sail, and, the American flag, with closed ports,—the *Shenandoah* in cold and foggy weather, crept along towards five helpless whalers, in a counterfeit of being a “companion.”

The twenty-eighth dawned, cold and clear, with eight ships in sight. There was land on the port beam, and, Diomedes Island was sighted in the early morning.

With glee, the swift cruiser under sail, soon ran down the *Waverly*, with five hundred barrels of oil on board.

Sacked and burned by noon,—the hulk was left, in heavy ice, as, still under the Stars and Stripes,—the “Black Shark” crept up to ten ships lying in plain view.

There was no wind, and no chance for the heavy whalers to escape! Even Waddell was now weary of destruction!

On the twenty-eighth of June, the deluded *Brunswick* sent a boat aboard the *Shenandoah* for “help!”

That doomed ship was in trouble, with her ensign flying, Union down! The call of the suffering mariner!

Receiving the men on board, the corsair then dropped her ports, ran up the grim “Stars and Bars,” and, opened a heavy battery fire, in the wildest excitement.

Near them, now, lay a whaler whose brave captain at once armed all his desperate men and got up his bomb guns, preparing to fight for the flag of our country.

Steaming up to the barricaded vessel, the deck officer of the *Shenandoah* cried through his trumpet, “Haul down your flag!”

The answer came ringing back, “Haul it down your-

self! G—d d—n you! If you think it is good for your constitution!" The old Pine stood out against the Palm!

"If you don't, I'll blow you out of the water," roared the executive officer.

"Blaze away, my duck," cried the captain, rifle in hand. "But, may I be eternally blasted, if I ever haul that flag down, for any cussed Confederate pirate, that ever floated!"

The order to fire was trembling on the officer's lips when Waddell, pale and stern, cried "*Hold!*" A pang of noble shame rent his sailor heart.

He sent an armed detachment of forty men aboard and dragged the brave and resolute old hero off his ship.

Before sundown, guards were posted on every one of the ten captured whalers. The destruction of half the Arctic Yankee fleet was now a fact.

A record which drove the cowardly drunkards of the *Shenandoah* into a delirium of joy!

Even the degraded Hiram Worth wept when the *James Murray* was hauled alongside.

It was a touching incident!

For, her captain lay dead on board.

His widow, with three little children at her side, begged the obdurate Waddell to spare the little estate left to her fatherless ones, the captain's interest in the vessel.

With the first mate, in tears, before him—the foeman Waddell turned away. "Let her take all her property, and, sail the ship, safe home!" he said. One touch of unsoiled manhood!

"Ransom it! Put all the prisoners you can on board with full stores," said the stern Confederate.

And so, one good deed shone out on this cruise, where the "skull and crossbones" should have flown at the mizzen peak, if these men only had "the courage of their convictions."

The *Nile* was also ransomed for a prisoners' transport (neither of the bonds being ever paid, as no one ever dared to present them, with the prison door yawn-

ing, and, the turnkey stalking behind! For the light had failed which shone, once, on the Stars and Bars).

Then came on the most brutal scene ever known in American maritime history! A record of shame!

Eight magnificent vessels were all blazing at once. The *Hillman*, the *Nassau*, the *Isaac Howland*, the *Brunswick*, *Mathew Second*, *Congress*, *Waverly* and *James Murray*, all of New Bedford, with the bark *Favorite*, made a terrific scene, as, amid the broken ice, the sea was covered with drifting burning boats, fired by the blazing oil!

The icy waters were covered with floating sails and cordage!

Yells of defiance from the six hundred penniless prisoners, cries for vengeance were heard, as the *Nile* and *James Murray* were hastily worked away to save destruction.

One by one the other floating ships sank, in sputtering flames,—as the *Shenandoah* forged along, her crew abandoned to the delirium of a ghastly triumph, and the frenzy of drink.

It was as if all human reason had deserted the madened brutes! The junior officers feared even to confer with each other!

There was a wild cheer when the men of the *Shenandoah* heard the orders to send the ship through Behring's Straits,—into the trackless Arctic in search of the scattered American whalers which, in some mysterious way, had taken alarm and sought a safe defence in the black inlets of the lonely waters where none but the brave dare to hold a tiller! *It was a last resort!*

Every art of Manning, the detested renegade, had been exhausted to find out from the prisoners of the ten ships, the haunt of this affrighted fleet. But, all in vain!

On, past the three islands, which guard the middle of the fifty-mile Behring's strait, the grim *Shenandoah* dashed with three huge Confederate flags flying at the mast heads. The defiance of a dead nation to the whole world!

The fur clad crew swept the dark waters with eager

eyes, until the steamer had crept beyond the seventieth degree of north latitude. Still, the sea was deserted!

Only huge ice fields, vast piles of bergs, frightful storms and chilling blasts met the adventurous keel of the *Shenandoah*.

Not a whaler's sail was in sight! Securely sheltered *somewhere*, half of the great Yankee fleet had escaped the corsair! No such grim intruder had ever pushed into the pathless Arctic Ocean, since the bold Cossack Deschnew, first, sailed through the Straits of Behring in 1648. No such cruise can ever be repeated!

Coming from a northern Siberian harbor, the brave Russian adventurer found the narrow inlet which alone cut off the terrible Tartar horsemen from a prehistoric conquest of America!

Behring, in 1728, never dreamed that the war guns of a defeated half of the greatest nation on earth, then unborn, would ever echo over these watery Arctic wastes.

With sullen and refractory officers,—ignorant of Waddell's final purposes, the ship was still thrust northward, till Ordnance Officer Allerton boldly faced Captain Waddell.

"You cannot trust the men longer, sir!" the honest Englishman said.

"They want fresh plunder or else the homeward route,—where to,—they know not, or, care not! Be warned by me!

"Our fresh provisions are exhausted, the men feel the cold terribly, coming so lately from the tropics. They all have concealed arms, the result of plunder,—there is much liquor hidden on board, and, I advise you, sir, to turn back out of the Arctic! It is your only wise course!

"We know not which way the other Yankee whaling fleet has turned, whether east or, west. If we lost our propeller, we might be driven ashore by any squall!"

While they argued, a terrible shock threw the whole ship's company to their knees! "General quarters" was sounded!

After hours of labor, the steamer was hauled off the giant ice floe on which it had been driven recklessly.

Badly strained, with much internal injury and displaced machinery, the half-crippled ship now turned its prow southward, leaving the prey of ten millions, sheltered by the god of the lightning and the gales! *The hidden fleet had escaped!*

No one dared to interrogate the commander, balked of his richest prey, as all the possible repairs were slowly effected at sea, and the half-crippled *Shenandoah* crept cautiously over the sunken ridge, only thirty fathoms deep in its middle notch, which, some day, may be spanned by a railway bridge uniting Asia and America.

The sea was now clear of bergs, the huge monsters being stranded on the shoals, but, freed ice and floes rushed madly through the gorge as Captain Waddell, in farewell, defiantly saluted the Confederate flag, finally, in the Arctic, as a July sun gleamed upon its folds! Three months before, "the Lost Cause" had become a sacred memory!

It was the vanishing glimpse of a battle banner consecrated on many a nobly foughten field! And, History will never forget the men in gray who marched with Jackson and with Lee!

The men of the *Shenandoah*, busied at cards or over their drink, slouched, now, over their watch duties.

Drills and gun discipline were all at an end! The officers did not dare to force the crew to their proper work.

The pall of dishonor had settled down upon the ship's company since the wanton destruction of ten superb merchant vessels only "to feed fat an ancient grudge!"

While a few of the educated officers looked dubiously at the future, the satisfied crew were robust, jolly and triumphant, as the fleet vessel, "cracking all sail on," skimmed south and, in the first week of July, broke through the Aleutian chain of islands, leaving Robben's Island to starboard.

"Open water! The blue Pacific!" cried a hundred



voices, as they emerged, only having lost a few plates of copper.

The sapphire sea was barren of all sails. The ship seemed lost on a lonely ocean.

It brought back to Allerton an old pirate drinking song,—“The doomed, in terror, fly before us!”

Everything had scuttled right and left and the northern ports, with Victoria and Vancouver, soon learned of a campaign as wanton as shameful, as disgraceful as bloodless,—the only infamy resting on the Confederate flag,—for, like Quantrell and Champ Ferguson, Mosby and the guerillas, the *Shenandoah* had no legal right to hold up the sacred banner wet with the blood of the peerless heroes of Battery Robinett and Pickett’s charge. They were at least fighting “Irregulars!”

Three weeks’ course held due southward, brought the corsair again into warm weather, and the crew shed their Esquimaux-like furs and coverings forever. The ship was stuffed with the richest furs, ivory and valuable plunder.

It was now a simple evasion of all passing vessels,—the semblance of military discipline merely was kept up, and—even Captain Waddell felt a tugging at his throat as of the saintly albatross slain by the Ancient Mariner! The end was near!

The Yankee “renegades” in the ship were all treated with the utmost scorn. For, they were useless now!

Manning, the Ananias of the cruise, was a mere butt and a human footstool, while no one noticed the secretive Hiram Worth, whose base cunning protected him under a feigned mental imbecility. The military code was abandoned! No naval regulations were enforced.

No gun of the batteries was now kept loaded!

And, in secret, each member of the ship’s company asked himself, “Whither bound? What is the end to be?”

But no one, as yet, dared to question the silent man, who felt the battle laurels of Drewry’s Bluff sadly soiled now by the inglorious barbarity of his infamous destruction of thirty-eight harmless American ships!

His crew had never even seen an American uniform, nor, fired a single shot, which was not a seal of eternal dishonor! Not the career which Captain Waddell would have chosen!

But, James Iredell Waddell guarded one dark secret from his whole command.

From a swift trading schooner luckily captured, he had obtained but one copy of the latest possible San Francisco paper of the date of April fifteenth, filled with the details of the brutal murder of President Abraham Lincoln. *It was a stunning blow!*

There were, strangely enough, no references to the general military situation, and Waddell, while he inferred much,—was still “officially” ignorant, of the collapse of Lee’s dauntless army,—the surrender of Johnston,—the downfall of the whole Confederacy and, even, the peaceful giving up of the undefeated rebel ironclad *Stonewall* at Havana, a boat which never fired a hostile shot, though it had defied a cowardly Federal frigate captain in the harbor of Corunna and Ferrol, and, sailed the Atlantic, untouched.

To prevent a possible riot, Waddell had destroyed this tell-tale paper.

He pretended to believe that the South was still fighting,—though being slowly beaten down. And; the crew held the same hope!

He had taken this sad news through Behring Straits with him in the mad Arctic quest, where the Ice King sent his quivering vessel back, half sinking under the shock of the terrific flocs! A secret which shook his inmost soul!

And, while torturing his lonely mind in secret,—the last Confederate commander, “on duty,” skimmed closely to the port of San Francisco, in his ignoble southern flight, hoping to capture a pilot boat off the Farallones, and so gain the latest tidings.

The news which he feared came soon enough!

On August the second, a sailing barque was encountered, and, under English ensigns, both vessels halted in the blue Pacific. Boats were soon sent off for the usual courtesies.

There was little now to tell of the desperate corsair in the guise of the weather-beaten *Shenandoah*, for the Confederate flag was no longer a legal ensign, and, the Captain felt that he was now being hunted over the seas by the fleets of certainly two nations, if not, an aroused world.

Sending a boat on board the *Barracouta*, with the men in plain clothes, Waddell locked himself in his cabin on their return, with the bundle of newspapers kindly presented to him. Late San Francisco journals!

With one puzzling exception, these were the first papers seen by Waddell, himself, since the triumphant departure of the *Shenandoah* from Melbourne, six long months before.

Then, came the crash of every hope, bringing new fears, and, new alarms! The iron game had been played and lost!

"The war is over. Davis is in chains! The Confederacy is now only a memory!" so groaned Waddell. Its dauntless armies had vanished into the gray mist of eternal defeat!

With a start, Waddell read of himself as bitterly denounced as a pirate, and, he saw the announcement that three American cruisers and an English man-of-war were now closely on his track. The news of his Arctic raid had at last reached California! The Pacific fleet was acting at last!

When the *Barracouta* was but a white cloud in the distance,—the Captain broke his long silence,—a silence kept since the flag had gone up on October 20th at Las Desertas,—with the cheers of the *Laurel's* crew and a Confederate salute.

Summoning all the men and officers, at once, aft,—the bronzed sailor told them all the main facts.

He bluntly said that they had nothing to blush for.

That they had all acted in good faith, and, had dealt the North heavy blows, not soon to be forgotten.

"Now!" he cried, raising his voice. "It is my duty to secure your personal safety! We have, no longer, the right to sail as a Confederate cruiser. Any new act

of war would be piracy! We would merit and surely receive, a summary death!

"But as a shipmaster, as the custodian of certain property, I know my duty and, I will do it!"

The amazed ship's company then retired for consultation.

In a few hours a general petition was handed to Captain Waddell, asking him "to go to Sydney or Melbourne, and, there, turn the ship and goods over to Her British Majesty's authorities."

To this most reasonable request, the self-contained mariner apparently agreed, and in fact, for twenty-four hours that course was kept, so lulling all discontent.

The men, now quickened by the fear of the hangman's noose, toiled with a will in dismounting all the guns, stowing them, then closing and stopping up all the port holes.

Uniforms and arms disappeared as if by magic. The stores of plunder enabled them all to dress as honest merchantmen.

The smokestack was whitewashed and every semblance of a warship was carefully eradicated. The ship's appearance and rig were changed.

In this drudgery of days, there was no hilarity. The *Shenandoah* was now unrecognizable, her guise being completely altered. She was the "sea scourge" no longer!

The men were gloomy and morose, the officers solitary and dejected, and, still she drove on, southward.

One of the lowest drudges on the now nameless and illegal boat, a boat with no papers, was the drink-sodden Hiram Worth, who had detected, at once, the secret change of the course for Cape Horn. For he had not forgotten his maritime skill!

He rightly divined the dark purpose of James Waddell to gain safety, pecuniary advantages and even, a future profit,—in reaching Fraser, Trenholm, and Company and the crafty Confederate agents and accomplices in Liverpool. For, there Waddell saw protection and assistance!

Lookouts nervously watched the horizon, and a panic

was created when a smart race with an English-built steamer—at last—on signalling, cautiously disclosed the sister ship of the disguised *Sea King*, the only vessel ever met in the fateful cruise, which had outsteamed or outsailed the fleet *Shenandoah*.

It was fresh and new, in good order and built on the same lines to a hair. The sister ships parted unrecognized!

Waddell dared not disclose the identity of his "nominal command" for fear of being reported to the next met cruiser!

For, the *Shenandoah* had now neither mate, friend nor ally on the earth above, now, nor the waters under the earth!

The men, at last, realized in the terrible rolling seas off Cape Horn, that they had been duped, as to the course.

Disarmed now, with the sullen officers all armed, and stiffly supporting the foxy Captain, the crew were powerless as they cursed old "Cape Misery" and, then, rounded the Horn,—seeing fourteen towering icebergs in one day, and narrowly escaping one which towered to three hundred and fifty feet in height, with a thousand feet below to add new terrors, to its shock!

The doleful voyage dragged slowly along, in discontent.

No sound of song, no sailor's horse play, no feasting marked the gloomy days. And, mutiny was whispered of!

Once in the South Atlantic, a formal deputation begged the Captain to steer to Capetown, for the safety of all and to surrender there, to the British authorities.

The black-browed commander heard them all in silence.

"There is no reply!" he said. "*I know my duty!*"

From that moment, he ignored even his commissioned officers and confided only in his steering quartermasters,—taking all the observations himself. The tension was terrible.

Two bands of would-be mutineers, sullen and silent, watched each other now, the officers, and the sailors

and gunners. Hiram Worth was a self-protecting schemer!

But, all felt that, should the engineers, stokers and firemen throw up their work,—should the Captain's routine authority be broken down,—that the ship's deck would soon be a bloody battle-ground, and, the victors perhaps swing at the yardarm of the first warship met! So, peace reigned!

Thus, flagless, unarmed, dismantled and staggering along,—the remorseless corsair crept back on its outward track, where it had lighted up the South Atlantic with blazing Yankee ships.

Two men on the *Shenandoah* were haunted nightly, one, the stern commander, who had seen every hope of his stormy life wrecked,—who knew now the futility and brutality of his work;—the other,—the man who writhed at night under the accusing glare of Jasper Coffin's dying eyes,—the wretch in whose ears the dying curse of the murdered man sounded still.

But, honest Hugh Allerton, treasuring the two pictures,—wrote down the whole story in his cabin.

"She shall know all!" he swore. "This once beloved woman!"

And so he wrote to her,—“Bill Tarbox, the ship's steward, knows the man who slew your husband,—a man who is a deserter, traitor and murderer! Get this last proof! Watch for Tarbox, and make him tell you all! He is a released prisoner, on his way home, to Cold Spring Harbor!”

CHAPTER XV.

“FURL THAT BANNER, FOR, 'TIS WEARY.”

While the timorous sailors of the *Shenandoah* awaited an answer from their morose Captain, the ship drove rapidly northward, under sail and steam, craftily avoiding the track of vessels bound for “the Horn.”

The returning cruiser skimmed along under full sail toward the Equator, finishing the last long leg of a

figure of eight voyage around the globe! A reckless yet crafty run!

A strange voyage in which no United States warship had ever been sighted,—a doubled reversed curve,—sweeping 360° in Longitude, and twice turned from 50° South,—to 70° North Latitude,—in one hundred and twenty degrees of northing and southing! The prizes had supplied all food, coal and supplies save the one halt at Melbourne.

Neither Dampier, Cook, Frobisher nor Drake ever covered such an eerie pathway over the trackless waters of this mundane sphere.

The sullen groups of loungers on the deck, noted with amazement, that "Jack Mason," the neglected Jonah, the unhung murderer, was now treated with an extreme consideration! It was a sudden and an unexplained change!

Some unseen influence supplied him with a little cabin, where dainties and all potables were at his beck and call!

Drinking alone, craftily planning his future,—Hiram Worth revolved all the possibilities of his future.

Dissembling his real purposes,—he feared lest some strange "accident," might cost him his life, before he reached terra firma. For, he knew that his "occupation was gone!"

The chatter of the frightened crew was all known to him!

The growing fear that the rope might reward "their own heroism" prevented the men from calling for "Jack Mason's" punishment! It was a case of "Arcades Ambo."

The degraded traitor knew that only Hugh Allerton could give any evidence against him, directly connecting him with the murder of Jasper Coffin!

And, even Allerton, had not seen him fire the fatal shot! The position of a walrus lance,—thrown down on the floor,—by Coffin's falling body, had enabled Worth to sullenly claim that the ex-Lieutenant had attacked him with the razor-edged weapon! And, no one could gainsay this!

And, Coffin's bold locking up of his cabin might have resulted from a desire to conceal funds which had been looted, later, by the captors! Worth could frame an ingenious tale!

Every man's luggage on the *Shenandoah* was now stuffed with valuables, the results of plunder, and as usual a few expert gamblers had gathered nearly all the ready cash into their slimy hands! The crew dared not quarrel!

A devilish desire to see the face of the beautiful Rolletta Coffin once more, possessed this fallen soul, and sly new schemes floated through his brain.

He knew that the unholy compact with the arch liar Manning and the other renegades would be kept!

They had been all promised protection! There was the "official report" of the cruise to be written up.

And so, the death of Jasper Coffin had been set down as the result of a fracas, due to the obstinacy of the rash Yankee officer! It was the safest way to avoid a glaring scandal.

One fear, alone, possessed "Jack Mason's" guilty heart!

"Did the *Milo* drift away with any one who had really recognized him? Beyond Tom Dunstan, the harpooner, no one had seemed to ever suspect him!

But, Hugh Allerton had carried on long conversations with Starbuck, Hansbrough and Jessup, drawn to them by their manly defiance of the irate Waddell! He admired the brave Yankees!

If Tarbox and Allerton had exchanged full confidences, then, Worth could not hope to succeed with his vamped up story!

For, a spirit in his feet was leading him back to see once more, the woman whom the dashing heir of Zenas Coffin had most unfairly won away from him! A glowing beauty, still ignorant of her widowhood!

In his enhanced comforts, he recognized Waddell's fear lest the "sea pilot" should betray the captured communication of Kussaroff to the crew, a story which, if proved to be officially known to Waddell, would have

made every Arctic capture of the corsair, a hanging matter for all concerned!

The last traitor of Long Island never fathomed Waddell's hope that he would drink himself to death, under the fierce heat of "the Line" which they were now approaching! He was given all that he called for.

That his true name and former rank were yet unknown to Allerton, he firmly believed, and, relief came to him when he realized that the English gunner would probably never see the shores of Long Island!

So, ignorant of Hugh's possession of all Jasper Coffin's papers, the crafty traitor built up, bit by bit, a sly tale to account for his presence on the pirate ship!

An explanation, which would enable him to even face his mother as well as Jabez and Mehitabel, and, one with which he could moreover boldly confront even Roletta Coffin.

Fear, anxiety and dissension, reigned as, a few days after the useless memorial of the crew,—the officers were all called into Captain Waddell's cabin and informed that he proposed taking the nondescript ship *to Liverpool*, as a result of his final study of the whole case!—There was a storm which broke the lines of Waddell's naval command forever!

A chorus of protest drowned Waddell's voice with cries of "Unwarranted!" "Bad Faith!" "Ungentlemanly" and in a rage, he turned them all out of his presence!

And so, the wretched bark drove on, toward the Azores, with two distinct cabals formed against the unpopular and arbitrary master of a ship, now the prey to the first civilized cruiser! One, the officers—the other the crew.

James Waddell knew that his acts in the Arctic were all indefensible, and yet, he relied, and wisely, on the firm determination of the British Government to prove that it had nothing to do, with a war ship, which was manned, equipped, provisioned, and, went into commission, regularly or not,—in Portuguese waters, and which was, never, for a moment, the subject of Yankee

protest, or, under the control of Her Majesty's authorities. Waddell's logical mind saved his neck!

"It is a narrow plank!" mused Waddell, "but, it will serve! The *Alabama* was a war ship, from the first, even as the "290," and, her detention had been often called for!

"We merely gave the Yankee spies the slip, and, equipped our cruiser, in alien and neutral waters! Yes! It was well done!"

Seeking only to avoid future trouble, the crafty Captain rightly reckoned on the support of his secret friends at Liverpool! And, yet the rank insubordination on board might any day flame up into open mutiny!

Navigating the ship alone, arming his faithful Quartermasters, he barricaded himself, at night, and held a few desperate followers together!

He, as well as the disguised Hiram Worth, both expert navigators, had figured out, that the *Milo* had, long ago, reached San Francisco!

The whole tale of the destruction of the *Reindeer* and *Favorite*, with the other two first burned vessels, would soon be followed by the news of the wholesale destruction of the Arctic fleet. And, "Uncle Sam" would howl!

The telegraph from Washington would send the Pacific Federal fleet out, fanlike, all over the Pacific, and, the relentless Charles Francis Adams might demand of England, the seizure and return of the guilty *Shenandoah* and her whole ship's company, for a due trial for piracy.

"To get first into the hands of the British authorities,—*voluntarily*, is my only salvation!" mused the lonely hermit of the *Shenandoah*, now feared and distrusted by every man on board!

But, while these thoughts also filled Hiram Worth's mind, for the "sea pilot" has easily divined Waddell's plans,—the sly traitor gloated over the aftermath of heart break, which would follow the news of the death of Jasper Coffin!

Sodden in his cups, he yet mused over the misery

of old Zenas Coffin, at the death of his only son and heir!

"He sent him to his doom!" growled Hiram, as yet ignorant of old Zenas' hatred of the woman in black who, still, mourned her guilty son as dead at Funchal. Hiram did not know of the early love episode of the two enemies.

"And, Roletta?" After a long introspection, he decided that the beauty of Huntington would soon forget them, both!

"Rich she will be, young, lovely, and, old Zenas with no heir, will give her enough money now! She will be a prize for some other favored lover! For, she is as fickle as the summer wind! She betrayed *me*! And, she will soon forget *him*! I must make her suffer, yet! It is not enough! I will have my revenge!"

He gloated over the widespread ruin worked among the wealthy stockholders in Cold Spring and New Bedford!

"All a pack of skinflint robbers!" he gleefully mused. "They have skinned the poor sailors long enough! They never will forget the *Shenandoah*!"

It was true! The howls of execration which at last reached Washington, betrayed how the flames of the *Shenandoah's* torches had seared the loyal New England soul, but, in the murder of Lincoln,—and the dull lethargy which followed the crash of the Confederacy,—a hundred graver issues had driven the brutal work of the last warship of the South out of men's minds! The sensational news fell flat!

The whole country was now drunken with blood and rapine! The beaten South lay desolated, under an armed heel!

Richmond, Petersburg, Charleston, and Columbia, all in ruins, were but single offerings, mere samples, of red Bellona's horrid trail! The Southland was wrecked!

In the blazing heat of the Equator, Hiram Worth, now quite master of his future plans, learned, by the ship gossip, of the fierce open letter of Captain Waddell

to his loyal officers, men whom he later denounced in his justificatory book, "as Mutineers"!

A poor return for the unshaken fidelity, with which this score of gallant fellows had followed him, around the world, in storm and sunshine, and executed his full orders, against their own better natures!

Fear, a craven fear of summary justice,—made all hands fly to their old stations, as a heavily armed American vessel (the first encountered) was sighted four hundred miles from the Azores,—lying in wait for something! There was no flag to betray the nation of the possible enemy! But, the style and rig told the whole story!

"Yankee cruiser! *Yankee cruiser!*" flew from lip to lip, and, then, the furnaces again roared! Under a cloud of canvas, as well as steam—while the *Shenandoah* scuttled away, like a frightened hare!

The common danger had brought them all together, once more, and, a sigh of dull relief went up, as the bulky stranger put up her helm and, abandoned the chase!

"Uncle Sam" had missed his chance, while Gideon Welles slumbered in the Navy Department!

As the boat swept on towards Lizard Head, they hove to at sea, while the body of Sergeant George Canning of the Marines was solemnly committed to the deep!

A veteran of Shiloh, a staff officer of Bishop and Lieutenant General Polk, the poor fellow's body was sadly committed to the deep, with the Roman Catholic ritual!

Save a poor Sandwich Islander, who had succumbed in the Ochotsk to the icy air, this was the first death in their number, and, the ship's company, with hatred in their hearts, glared at each other, until the dull plunge told that the sea had claimed the poor Confederate soldier's body!

On, onward ever, the fresh supplies now being utterly exhausted, on the fourth of November, sixty-five, nearly *seven weary months* after Lee's surrender,

the white cliffs of England were sighted! Every heart beat in a mad unrest!

One hundred and thirty-two days out from Behring's Straits, the men who had so gaily left Liverpool,—fired with hope, on the *Laurel*,—crept past Holyhead, in the blustering early winter,—a disgraced, quarrelling and amorphous mass!

Neither prisoners, refugees, nor "Honorably surrendered,"—they all felt that they were now "hunted fugitives" and under the ban of God and man!

Conscience accused every man!

Not a signal was answered of all the crowding craft in the channel of St. George, as the weather-beaten steamer forged along, plunging over a nasty sea, showing no flag.

At midnight, off the mouth of the Mersey, a burly pilot, in dripping oilskins, clambered on the bridge to be sullenly confronted by the stony-faced Captain Waddell!

"What ship is this!" the pilot hastily asked.

"The late Confederate steamer *Shenandoah*," gruffly said Waddell.

"*Where in God's name, from!*" roared the astounded pilot.

"From the Arctic Ocean, via Behring's Straits, direct!" answered the Captain as he caught sight of the blinking lights on shore through the driving Scotch mist!

"Seen no papers then?" bluntly demanded the astounded pilot.

"No!" gruffly replied Waddell.

"Well, the war's over! The South was beaten down at last! Davis is in prison! This Government alone has seven war vessels out, looking for you, now! Seen any?"

"Only a lumbering Yankee cruiser at the Western Islands! Take the ship! *I'm done with it!*" cried Waddell.

There was no sign of welcome, the next day, as the dismantled cruiser slowly worked her way up between Liverpool and Birkenhead!

The crew were drunken and riotous, reckless now, shivering with the fear of English jails!

All the officers slept armed, locked and barricaded in their rooms,—several of the most loyal, rallying around the intractable Waddell!

The worst characters in the crew had formed a desperate plot to rob all the officers, to secure their wages, for they knew now that their plunder was in danger, and the paymaster had never once settled with the *Shenandoah's* crew.

Beyond their advance, the deluded mariners had never seen the color of an English golden sovereign! Their plunder was their only pay.

It was Hugh Allerton who pressed a few of the mariners into service, and kept the maddened mob from forcing Waddell's cabin! A mere matter of habitual discipline.

Vast crowds had gathered on the Liverpool docks, and the Birkenhead quays, as the telegraph from the mouth of the Mersey, had reported the incoming corsair, as "returned from the dead."

The city of Liverpool was in an indescribable uproar, and telegrams were despatched to Downing Street and the American Legation, long before the dishonored craft had cast her anchor under the guns of Her British Majesty's Str. *Donegal*.

Standing where he could see the two detained Laird rams lying uselessly at anchor, the last hope of Bullock and Raphael Semmes, still moored before the Lairds' shipyard, Captain James Iredell Waddell cried, "Quartermaster! Haul down the flag!"

The Confederate ensign once so proudly saluted at Funchal, had been flying, at the mizzen peak, all the way up to the muddy river, from its mouth, even while the unlucky ship stuck for four hours on a muddy bar!

Waddell had hoped to be boarded and officially taken in charge long before reaching the city. But, his arrival was undreamed of!

When an armed boat dashed alongside from the *Donegal*, the Captain sullenly said to its officer,

handing the *Shenandoah's* flag to his own Secretary, "I surrender this vessel to the British Government!"

Leaving his officers on the deck, he stepped into his cabin with the boarding Lieutenant! He sought safety on the *Donegal*.

The boat soon shot away, leaving two armed British marines at the gangway, an ominous sign!

All over the ship, the disorderly crew were now roving at will, breaking rooms open and thieving everywhere!

Without delay, an officer of rank arrived from the *Donegal*, with twenty-five marines, in full marching order, and the same number of armed blue-jackets! The long cruise was at an end! Order was instantly re-established, in the Queen's name.

All on board were coldly notified that they were held as strict prisoners of the English Government!

"The *damned Yankees* never got us, at any rate!" remarked Lieutenant Paul Braxton, slipping to the side of the boat and casting his broken sword into the muddy tidewater!

"No," dryly remarked Hugh Allerton, "if they had, we would have been strung up on lines in the rigging, like the sailors' washing! It was a dirty job, from first to last, and, I'm glad the run is over! For, we never fired a shot in honor, from Funchal to Liverpool! I want a pot of shore beer to take the taste out of my mouth!"

Confusion reigned in Liverpool! Shoals of boats were warned away, and steamers, tugs and yachts soon all clustered around the scourge of the Arctic!

While the gloomy Waddell was inditing a long and indignant letter to Earl Russell, there was a farewell "blow out," in the ward room! The loyal officers had a last symposium!

The men, too, were engaged in a general orgy, and, only, the Quartermasters and a few servants,—noticed Captain Waddell, on his return from the *Donegal*, protected by the British commander.

All authority was at an end, and, any attempt at command, was met with, "Oh! you be blowed! We're

all in for Pentonville prison, *together!*" But, the English officers soon quelled all this!

While the strictest guard was ordered, the sentries evidently sympathized with the humbler prisoners!

To open communication with the shore, in the dark, one of the *Shenandoah's* Lieutenants, disguised in common sailor's clothes, gave a bottle of the best brandy to the "jackey" at the gangway! A general passport!

Stealing down the ladder, a hovering boatman, for two of the last eight golden sovereigns the ruined man possessed, rowed the emissary of the officers ashore to try and hunt up the "Southern friends," once as thick as "leaves in Vallombrosa."

Stealing up Lime street, to the "Washington Hotel," (the great blockade runners' headquarters), the escaped prisoner soon ran into Mr. Adger, a warm Confederate partisan.

After a survey of the waif, the sympathizer took his prize to the Adelphi, and fitted him out,—showering every hospitality on him! For, Adger was a prince!

But by midnight, after hearing the whole gloomy budget of the year of downfall, the chivalric sailor insisted on returning to share the fate of his comrades!

All looked dark! It was supposed that the American government would demand the surrender of the prisoners!

Driving to the landing stage, Captain North, Confederate States Navy, and Mr. Robinson, the late Confederate States agent, absolutely forced the unwilling sailor to remain!

"Madness to go back there," they insisted!

"We are moving heaven and earth! You will only complicate matters and bring down condign punishment, on some other innocent man or men!"

And so, the only *Shenandoah* man on shore, was fain to submit, and, all the next day from a distance, to watch the ship, now the "lion" of the Mersey! The whole city was agog!

On the evening of November sixth, like wildfire, the news ran over Liverpool of the telegraphed order

to Captain Paynter of the *Donegal*, "to release all the prisoners on the *Shenandoah* or *Sea King*, who were not British subjects!"

On the steamer *Bee*, a party went out from the shore to see James Iredell Waddell muster his motley crew, for the last time!

By some astounding "fiction," every human soul on the *Shenandoah* denied being a British subject, save stout Hugh Allerton who cried "Damn me! I'll not deny my country! Lock me up for being a fool, for thirteen long months!" He would not lie!

The men were all eagerly packing up whatever they could grab, when the *Bee* began to whistle for departure!

Finally, laden with their plunder and belongings, the surly pirates listened to Captain Waddell's last words!

In the delight of regained freedom, the departing throng gave their unpopular Captain, three perfunctory cheers, as the *Bee* left the ship! So, the curtain dropped forever!

The last armed Confederate force in existence had been disbanded, when that motley mass of half-sobered men was cast ashore on the sloppy streets of Liverpool! "A most lame and impotent conclusion!"

The officers had all been transported on shore, by dark, and only the tread of the British sentry resounded on the worn decks of the ship which had made the most audacious, cruel and brutal cruise ever sailed, under any civilized flag!

Only memories of shame cling to the *Shenandoah* save, one single, noble act!

Commander J. D. Bullock, the chivalric Southern Naval Representative in Europe, had hoarded seven thousands pounds of Confederate cotton money, in English gold.

Knowing of the destitution of the officers and crew, he turned these funds over as an allotment, to pay 200 pounds each to every officer,—and, full wages to the crew, who had been faithful to their dark trust!

But, though this fund passed through Waddell's hands,—by some mischance,—only fifty to 100 pounds,

ever reached any officer, this being grudgingly doled out at George's Hotel, Dale Street, Liverpool! The crew, too, was skinned.

Somebody kept the rest of this hard earned blood money!

In the general indignation which followed,—W. Bedlove Smith, the ship's Paymaster, took up the cause of the destitute crew, and, he volunteered to make out their rolls and see them righted!

This equitable labor was declined by those who had the gallant Bullock's funds, in their ignoble hands!

Wiggins, a grizzled old Quartermaster, haggled with the restless crew, rallied them all on shore, and finally obtained all their receipts in full, for about a third to a half of their shamefully earned pittance!

The men never received their rights, and they soon scattered in fear of future proceedings, to the four quarters of the Earth!

One incident marked the final separation of the dis-franchised officers of the *Shenandoah*!

Men who had lost all rights in America, they were left, citizens of no country, stranded in a strange land, a realm which had forgotten its love for the sunny South, as rats desert a sinking ship! For "Uncle Sam" was now backed by a million veterans.

The Secretary of the Commander stoutly refused to deliver up the corsair's flag to Captain Waddell, on his demand, and he departed with it, to parts unknown, having bullied out his own wages in full, being a man of iron nerve! *So, disappeared the last Confederate flag!*

The officers separated with no heritage of glory, and none of them ever knew of the disposition of the valuable plunder of the *Shenandoah*. This is an unsolved mystery!

Some sly soul had enriched himself, and, when James Iredell Waddell returned to America, after several years of comfortable European travel, "the incident was closed," as the witty French say.

In that saturnine commander's own narrative there is much left in darkness, and the hiatus as to the

plunder of the whaleships and old Starbuck's treasures, has never been explained.

Ignominy, aversion and bitterness followed the cast-aways in the streets of Liverpool, but, no one dared agitate the *Shenandoah* matter.

The United States, triumphant, powerful, with a million ready veterans, was significantly kicking the French out of Mexico, and "Uncle Sam" now had his fighting boots on!

And so, journalists, merchants, statesmen and diplomatists let the Arctic corsair drop from their memory, until its story was brought back by England's most generous and ample settlement, later, of all the injuries of the Confederate cruisers.

A settlement, as honorable as liberal, because made from a sense of public justice, and, with eyes at last opened to dangerous schemes which never had the sanction of the British Crown. *A settlement which honored humanity!*

When the last "buccaneer," had cleared out of the captive *Shenandoah*, the officer in charge of the ship called Ordnance Officer Hugh Allerton before him.

Over a substantial dinner in the vacated cabin where Captain Waddell had so long concocted his dark schemes, the blunt gunner told the kindly lieutenant his whole story.

They had not finished the second bottle when Lieutenant Vyse kindly said "Allerton, my boy, you got into a bad lot,—a very tough crowd! Now, to-morrow, I'll give you a half dozen men! You can get a barge! The ship is all full of furs and plunder and stuff. No inventory has been taken, as yet!"

"I declare you, *unofficially*, to be an American!—I can so put your name down as Hugh *Allarton*, not *Allerton*, so you need not be ashamed of yourself. This will give you freedom!

"Get together about a thousand pounds' worth of this stuff and then,—hook it! I'm going on shore all day to-morrow. When I come back at evening gun fire, *I do not wish to find you on board!* I risk my commission for you!"

The burly gunner shook the generous officer's hand. "God bless you, old fellow!" he cried. "This keeps me from chucking myself into the muddy river!"

And, in fact, two weeks later, Allerton had realized a little over fifteen hundred pounds clear from the furs, a magnificent selection, creditable to his quickly acquired taste, sold to a firm of Liverpool Jew furriers.

Then, putting a clean thousand pounds in the Bank of Liverpool, he had a grand old "shore run" with a couple of hundred, and, with a neat kit, shipped as third mate of a freight steamer the *Cygnets*, which did reach Bombay!—He dared not even visit his old mother, for fear of capture.

Before his sailing day, even while scurrying out of England, to protect the kindly Lieutenant Vyse, he sent, by ocean express,—all the effects of Lieutenant Jasper Coffin, to Miss Roletta Armstrong, Fort Greene Place, Brooklyn, New York, and carefully deposited in the Post Office a registered letter in which he returned the two pictures taken from the cabin of the *Favorite*. While he suspected the marriage, he used the name written on the lovely woman's picture.

His narrative of the brutal murder of Jasper Coffin was a clear and convincing one. "I can be heard of, care of the Bank of Liverpool, at any time" the honest fellow wrote.

"I don't like Yankees but, I'll come to Long Island to face that brute if he ever turns up. He disappeared from the *Shenandoah* here and I believe that he shammed insanity and so, got off the very first man. He had considerable money concealed within his belt. I tried to ransack his luggage!—He carried nothing away and I believed that he has chucked all his things overboard. He is a desperate scoundrel.

"He was smarter than even old skipper Waddell, and, I believe he fooled us all! Look out for him! He means no good to you. I tried to get his name, his past rank and yet, he was always on the defensive, whether drunk or sober!

"Only one man can aid you! Bill Tarbox! the Steward of the *Reindeer*! He has the secret!

"For, wherever this man Jack Mason came from, Bill Tarbox knew him—and he can tell you who he was! This Jack Mason never would tell me what ship he had deserted from, but, "Portuguese Ann" at Funchal,—if alive,—or José Oliviera, her brother, would recognize this brute. He should hang for that cruel murder! He is an American citizen and you can hang him any time if you can prove his identity.

"I'll cross the four seas to give evidence against him."

CHAPTER XVI.

HUGH ALLERTON'S TIDINGS.

Having performed this pious duty, Hugh Allerton sailed out of the Mersey for Bombay, glad to have the clean salt breeze blow away the ignoble memories of the shameful crawling home of the shameless corsair.

"That's our thirteen months' unlucky cruise left behind with the curse of a Judas on it!" growled Allerton, as he lost the Lizard lights in the driving mist. He was once more a man and a sailor!

While he chafed in his wrath,—a wild-eyed man of thirty chaffered long on the Liverpool docks with the head cook of the English steamer *Dunedin Castle*, bound for Havana. It was the wandering Hiram Worth!

The evident intelligence of the uncouth stranger struck the cook who said gruffly, "Go get cleaned up and trimmed up and then, I'll give you a job in the storerooms, but, you look like 'an old man of the sea,' now!"

"I've a good kit," said the stranger, "I'll have the ship's barber fix me up later. Let me come on board! I have some money."

A five pound note slipped to the "man of saucepans" finished the business.

"Been up to some criminal trick and wants to get

away from the 'Bobbies,' " muttered the cook, as he concealed the welcome note.

Next day, the *Dunedin Castle* dropped down the Mersey and with his hair and beard half cropped, no man could have recognized Hiram Worth in the haggard eyed store room servant, whose temples were now well streaked with gray. He looked worn and weary, as if by long illness.

But, in a neat flannel suit, silent and attentive,—the fugitive did his work well and kept only half drunk, from the wines and liquors furnished by the pantryman. His money belt was full.

For the fleeing murderer, crafty and cool, was now safe from all pursuit, and he had still nearly a thousand dollars hidden in his belt. His self control had returned.

One purpose now haunted him night and day, one formed in the insanity of a yet unslaked passion.

To lord it yet as the owner of the Hilliard mansion and, then, to gloat over Roletta Coffin, flaunting his wealth in her face. For, he knew the mortgage was good!

And a sly story had crystallized in his mind. So, he fled southward swiftly, intending to make his way, later, to New York, while Allerton's letter was safely travelling on the Cunard steamer *Persia*.

After the departure of the *Cygnets* and *Dunedin Castle*, the *Shenandoah* sensation became stale and Liverpool quickly quieted down.

Some subtle influence had hastened out of town all the members of the *Shenandoah* crew, and the vessel, mysteriously stripped of her valuable plunder, lay, forfeit in the Mersey, as the runaway *Sea King* which had fatally clouded hull, crew and owners by the abandonment of the legal voyage and the false entries on her log.

The city was harried with the buzz of Federal agents, all seeking evidence to complicate Great Britain in the case of the "Anglo-rebel cruisers," as submitted finally to the Geneva Arbitration of 1871.

But, the newspapers were all soon silenced, strange

lapses of memory afflicted all concerned and no one stood as responsible for the shame and disgrace and the blazing ocean trail of the corsair.

The slyly dispatched Federal agents who stole away to Funchal, found that Consul Barlow had been baffled there by the liberal use of money.

Not even from "Portuguese Ann," or the half bandit José,—could any valuable gossip be gathered. No one claimed to have trafficked there with the *Laurel* or that strange steamer bearing the red, white and red lanterns! All lied, and, lay close like a pack of beagles.

Even at Las Desertas, the few sullen natives had "forgotten" all past occurrences!—A strange lapse!

Many ships hauled in there to escape "red tape," trouble and port fees at Funchal, and the indigènes of the rocky group merely stated that a dozen foreign vessels had hauled in within two years to their rock guarded bay, to paint ship, clean copper and refit at leisure. They could not even remember the *Sea King*!

Not even at Très Palmas, could a clue be gained as to whether the *Shenandoah* had followed the *Reindeer* to the Arctic, or, seduced from her crew, the traitors who had led the saturnine Waddell to the chosen hiding place of the American fleet at Drummond's Island, Ascension and the Ochotsk.

The "facts" of the murder of an officer of the whaler *Reindeer* at Funchal were still incontrovertible, and so, the devil fought for his own, and Hiram Worth's infamous ruse remained undetected! He was again, decided to be dead!

All over the coast line of Europe, the friendly agents who had aided the flag of the "Stars and Bars" were still protected by the lingering Confederate officers and ex-diplomats, who destroyed all their incriminating correspondence. And, many people forgot many things!

For some years, several of the Southern notables lingered in Europe, being welcome especially in France, where Louis Napoleon fiercely resented Seward "showing his army the door in Mexico."

It is a pity that "Uncle Sam" did not give "Mr. Louis Napoleon," a good thrashing in 1865.—He merited it!

A new born caution in England caused Her Majesty's Government to avoid all clamor, all admissions, and such a policy of "masterly inactivity" bore good fruit.

No one will ever know the details of the settlement of the money affairs of the great house of Fraser, Trenholm and Company with the defunct Southern Confederacy.

The "open books" of Jeff Davis' sprightly "young republic in arms" were balanced like the final accounts of the great Napoleon, by Time and oblivion!

As for those men representing the Richmond government in Europe, their responsibility was closed like that of the great "Captain of Hussars," Blucher, who squared all his dealings with the King of Prussia by frankly saying, "I had certain millions; I have nothing, now! Hence, I must have spent them, in the good cause!"

Neat and effective logic!—Most convincing, too!

With amazement at Waddell's hardihood in his cruise of "legs, not arms,"—the world followed the sickening details of the plunder and burning in the Arctic, turning away in disgust, that the last guns of the Confederacy should have been fired into the pitifully helpless prey, sacred by all the laws of humanity, and the generous "sailor code."

It was an outrage on that gallant soldier spirit which led Lee's army, even in the last crash at Appomattox to drive back the Federal lines, capture guns, colors and prisoners, and, then furl their flags, defiantly and sadly,—by the orders of their own generals, steadfast and fearless, to the last!

It was an outrage on the naval bravery which sent the *Alabama* to the bottom in a game fight, and on that courage which sustained the heroic old Franklin Buchanan at Mobile Bay,—in his two hours' struggle, alone with the *Tennessee*, against the strongest Federal fleet ever gathered together, to that date.

And so, friend and foe, dropped the unwelcome mem-

ories of Waddell's inglorious exit from the high seas! It was an unsavory story.

The "Federals" were waiting to recoup themselves, the Confederates glad to disown the needless barbarity in the Behring Sea,—and, so England, France and Portugal had much to conceal, in diplomatic politeness.

And, realizing all this,—acute minded,—inspired by a devilish cunning,—Hiram Worth laughed as the *Dunedin Castle* sped past the Azores to Havana. He felt safe!

He had slyly dogged Hugh Allerton to the *Cygnets* on her departure, and he well knew, at the "George's Hotel" in Dale Street, Liverpool,—that the last member of the corsair's crew had disappeared quickly to prevent an unenviable notoriety.

It was a singular desire to avoid being known as harboring the disgraced pirates, which caused the Liverpool publican to call Worth aside on his last furtive visit.

"See here, my man," sharply said the host. "Don't hang around here any longer! Your friends are all gone! One of them has left a big Russian dog here, a fellow so ferocious that we dare not keep him!"

"Now, I'll give you a five-pound note, if you'll just take the dog and clear out!"

Worth at once recognized Paul Braxton's magnificent Siberian blood hound "Pribiloff."

This noble animal, four feet in height, as graceful as a leopard, was of a living steel bronze hue, with deep, dark, tender eyes glowing like burning coals.

He bounded upon Worth, pawing the renegade in delight, for, the pseudo "Jack Mason" had often fondled the superb beast on the lonely voyage since the chivalric Braxton, at the risk of his life, took the animal off the fo'ksal of a burning whaler near the Pribiloff Islands.

Poor Braxton, turned loose with only fifty pounds, in lieu of his two hundred, had a long and weary road before him.

To return, via Bermuda, to the devastated Mississippi home, where two brothers lay buried, after seal-

ing their devotion at the battle of Jackson,—to a state where the impoverished negroes ruled their masters—where Federal garrisons harried the defeated patriots, was a sad enough fate, even for a corsair!

Losing citizenship, civil rights and his patrimony,—Paul Braxton could not take with him the noble dog, a reminder of the ignoble cruise of the tamely surrendered war ship.

"Dodging a fight, swindling the Yankees out of an undoubted prize at the end of the war—the record of this voyage must be blotted out!" so mused the brave young Southern sailor.

And, years later, he finally achieved a decent standing and fortune on the Pacific Coast,—recalling with sadness the buckling on of that sword which he had cast away, broken, in the dark Mersey, in his despair!

"Thank God that I fought with Jack Magruder, at Galveston," he mused, living over the hour of triumph of the capture of the Federal fleet when the never-forgotten Wainwright died on the deck of the *Harriet Lane*,—refusing to yield up the beauty of the United States Navy. "I was an officer and a gentleman, *once*," he proudly mused.

He had left ten pounds to insure the splendid dog a decent home, and, fate sent the animal to rove the world with the houseless Judas who had now no single friend but the mute "Pribiloff."

On the *Dunedin Castle*, Worth's ship-wise intelligence was soon manifest and the devil soon aided him to a promotion.

A twenty days' lay in filthy Havana Bay, under the frowning Morro Castle carried off two of the officers of the *Dunedin Castle*, with yellow fever.

Reckless, fearless,—only busied with his dog, having shipped under the name of "William Walsh," Hiram Worth was made fourth officer of the packet.

To the bluff Captain, an ex-blockade runner, the renegade darkly intimated that he had had some "trouble" at Honolulu,—and so, had "skipped his ship" on arrival at Liverpool, "to avoid being handed over to the American Consul."

Dupe no more, having dropped the pirate's trade, Worth was acceptable to a man busied in sly smuggling at both ends of his trip.

It was the "temps de relâche." America was demoralized!

Morals were as low on the sea as in the distracted United States, and the sea rovers were debauched by the blockade running and the infamous attempt to set Maximilian up in a pinchbeck empire, to rule the defiant Mexicans.

So, the star of Worth's destiny slowly rose from the abyss of shame but, the red stain of murder clung to its baleful light.

Fired with his desire to know of the situation on Long Island, Hiram Worth, fell foul, accidentally, of the second mate of an American schooner regularly trading in salt fish between New York and Havana.

A fifty dollar "greenback" crossed the palm of the new fledged comrade whom he met in the coffee houses and drinking booths of the market, on the Prado.

Another fifty dollar note was sealed up and left as a deposit with the agent of the *Restless*, to be delivered over, when the information should be forthcoming, on their next meeting at Havana.

"William Walsh" guardedly gave all the directions to the friendly spy, and then,—safe in his alias,—sailed back to Liverpool.

He was regarded as a "treasure trove," for, the treason had not blotted out his sailor craft. He made a superb officer.

With the fierce "Pribiloff" at his heels, the Fourth Officer was a match for any dozen drunken sailors, soaked with Havana rum, or crazed by the wiles of the "Senoritas," of the Santa Clara Quarter. He was a fearless devil, now!

Made a confidant of all the Captain's thieving schemes,—Hiram Worth saw his way to some sure future profits, as well as to covering his own tracks.

"When I have established 'William Walsh' as a real personage and I get my regular English papers, I

can go back safely to Long Island!" mused the adventurer.

"No one would know me now!" So, he concluded, as he gazed in the glass.

He had reckoned without his host.

Honest Tom Dunstan had kept his own counsel!—The "second harpooner," lying with his broken leg in the sick bay of the *Shenandoah*, penniless and a captive,—feared to fully impart his suspicions to the three officers or to Bill Tarbox, lest he might be murdered, as a helpless prisoner, by the man whose voice, bearing, figure and movements were so strangely familiar. He had divined Worth's secret!

Left, stranded, at San Francisco,—while the *Reindeer's* officers were all sent on to Cold Spring by Panama,—Tom Dunstan saw Bill Tarbox go on with Captain Jonas Starbuck who had slyly insured his own share of the catch for fifty thousand dollars with several sound insurance companies by the adroit handling of various agents to whom he had directed much profitable business. And so, Starbuck had saved his profits!

From San Francisco, through the Russian Consul,—Starbuck had sent dispatches to Kussaroff, at the Kuriles informing him that he would return at the opening of another year,—and, that his own share of the profits was saved by the insurance so craftily effected.

Poor Tom Dunstan worked his way back to Cold Spring Harbor, as an "able seaman," on the clipper *Dreadnaught*,—determining to solve the mystery of the recrudescence of Hiram Worth by a furtive conference with old Jabez Simpson.

The cold blooded murder of Jasper Coffin was still unsuspected by the poor harpooner, who only felt that Coffin,—bold to rashness, had lost his life in an unsuccessful attempt to destroy the whaling papers on the schooner, or to save his private funds.

The crash came—at last!—For, the telegraphed tidings of Jasper Coffin's death had wrought important changes in Roletta Armstrong's future.

While the *Shenandoah* was nearing Cape Horn on her return, a carriage driving up to Fort Greene Place

brought the heart-broken old millionaire to confer with Mrs. Armstrong and her sister before breaking the news to the young bride-wife of a week, now a widow even in her virginal bloom.—Jabez Starbuck had telegraphed from San Francisco.

Busied with her plan of "polishing up" to the requirements of "high life," the ambitious girl, secure now in every luxury, had only looked forward to Jasper's return as to the time of her social coronation. The man was but a dream to her.

The convenient "taking off" of Hiram Worth had been to her but a source of secret satisfaction. She was free of him, by the grace of God.

With the ready "expansibility" of a "parvenue," the young coquette had grown into her new life, as if "born to the purple," and, she ruled old Zenas Coffin with her every caprice, as a living revenge upon the hated Worths and the haughty Wardours.

All was settled as to the "modus vivendi," long before. Roletta Coffin's coupè brought her back,—glowing and radiant, from a long music lesson, given by an Italian master of the true professional fervor.

The ashen gray face of the old miser was a mirror of his hopeless sorrow, as he closed his conference with the two women. The loss of his only son and heir had crushed him!

"I have nothing left me now but, my money, and, Roletta!" he mourned.

"You, Abigail, can do one thing to soften my gloom! Let the public remain still deceived, as to the past! It is nobody's business!

"My poor boy, Roletta's husband, is at the bottom of the sea! I have not a friend, not a relative! Tabitha Tarbox is getting old!

"I am tired of her croaking and worried with her grumbling! I'll pension her off! Come and rule my home! You shall direct all! My life is done! All is black, before me, now!

"As for Roletta, I cannot bear the sight of her first grief!" He pressed a bundle of banknotes into the widow's hand.

"Bring your child to me, as my adopted daughter! I will alter my will to-day, and, leave her all! I go, now, to my lawyer! When will you arrive?"

The two sisters exchanged telegraphic glances.

"*To-morrow!*" promptly cried the agitated mother.

"Of course," grimly said Zenas, "Roletta is to wear no black! You know why! All her educational matters can go on, at my home! I will see that she has everything, everything, that money can procure! As for me," he threw up his hands with a sigh of despair, "My life is wrecked! Jasper! Jasper, my boy!" he groaned, bursting into unavailing tears.

When the *Dunedin Castle* had returned to Liverpool, for four months,—Mrs. Armstrong had already been the ruler of the mansion where the stern old man still cried "Absalom! O, my son Absalom!" In that flinty heart, was but one soft spot!

That the widow should take charge of the household of her friendly agent, the man who had now swept her farm by purchase into his possessions, seemed but natural!

But, all Suffolk County now wondered at the stately magnificence of Roletta Armstrong's daily life.

The wild rumors of the romantic adoption ran over Huntington,—and all the country side,—but, the money king of the region kept his doors sternly closed to the curious.

A golden luxury reigned in the house where Roletta Armstrong emerged from the grub of the mere village belle into the gorgeous butterfly of the "grande dame, à la mode des nouveaux riches!"—A sudden rise, and, yet, her accomplishments gilded her pathway.

Not an inclination of her haughty head ever saluted the "local quality," as she was driven by liveried servants in her own magnificent equipage.

At the side of the stony faced old plutocrat, her beautiful countenance was seen as she daily drove down to the Bank, with him, in his carriage, for his "hour of audience," with the needy borrower. The two were inseparable.

The hue and cry over Jasper Coffin's death,—the

rage over the wanton destruction of the whaling ships,—had subsided somewhat, for, Zenas Coffin had recouped himself fully with his insurances,—and, then he set about the dispatch of a new fleet of five of the best idle whalers on the Atlantic coast, under Starbuck, Hansbrough, Jessup and two other selected Captains.

Strange to say, old Bill Tarbox declined to sail again under his old commander, and, so, was made Head Storekeeper at Cold Spring Harbor,—where Tabitha, now comfortably pensioned,—stirred his grog, and kept house for the old sailor, home from the sea forever!

Bill's lips were sealed, as he had "a keen eye to the main chance!" He never agitated the mystery of Roletta Armstrong.

As for Tom Dunstan,—no inducement could cause him to ship again with the man who had abandoned him, penniless, at San Francisco!—It was a case of "Once bit, twice shy!"

It was one of Miss Roletta Armstrong's freaks to settle the "Second Harpooner" as watchman and general factotum, at the Coffin mansion, in view of the sudden liking, following Tom's relation of Jasper Coffin's gallant resistance to the pirates in the Ochotsk! For, Jasper Coffin had died game!

Starbuck's splendid new fleet was off for the Arctic, before Hiram Worth's keen witted spy spent a few days at the taverns of Oyster Bay, Cold Spring and Huntington, and chattered with the few lingering members of the old *Reindeer* crew.

All went well and smoothly with Starbuck, who had repaid old Jabez Simpson and redoubled his "private stock" for the new long voyage which was to more than recoup the one last unlucky year!

A heavy steamer purchased at San Francisco was to act as a tender to the Cold Spring fleet, taking out a full cargo to the Ochotsk, under permits obtained through the Russian Consul at San Francisco, now a partner with Starbuck and Kussaroff.

But one drop of bitterness lingered in Zenas Coffin's

cup!—He ardently desired to purchase the splendid old "Hilliard Mansion," as a gift for the girl widow who masqueraded still as Miss Roletta Armstrong! The freak of an old Midas!

To Zenas Coffin's surprise, every overture to Mrs. Mary Worth was flatly rejected by Jabez Simpson, the agent of the widow who declined even to see the crafty millionaire!

For the legal settlement of Hiram Worth's estate had given his mother the title to the old estate.

The offer of thirty thousand dollars, with a bonus of five more, in addition, (far more than its value), for the foreclosed estate, was quietly rejected.

"Give it up, Squire! She means that you shall never have it!" said Jabez Simpson. He was a friend of both the foes.

"Mary's never held her head up since Hiram's death!" he said.

The receipt of a certificate of deposit in a New York bank for three thousand dollars, as part of the "Estate of Hiram Worth, deceased" was a mystery which only Jonas Starbuck or Bill Tarbox could have solved, but, the mother whose growing sorrow never left her, steadfastly believed that some foul deed had robbed her of the son whom she had invested with every romantic attribute of honor! And so, she invested "the dead" with every heroic attribute!

For reasons of mere self-interest,—the bitter enemies, Starbuck and Tarbox, held their tongues, with all the cunning of the native Long Islander! There was nothing to be gained.

It was January, sixty-six, that "William Walsh" now the second officer of the *Dunedin Castle*, sat over a bottle of Spanish hill wine, in the market café of Joe Otero, at Havana, with the mate of the *Restless*.

Hiram Worth had schooled himself to many a shock, yet,—his lips trembled as the mate, glad of his second fifty dollar note, told him of the sudden death of the great millionaire Zenas Coffin.—It was a strange story.

"I couldn't stay there forever, on fifty dollars, Walsh," said the kindly spy, "and so, the tavern keeper

at Huntington agreed to post me, if I'd bring him a few boxes of Havanas! It seems," he said, reading from a pencil scrawl, "that Coffin was out driving, in his sleigh, with his adopted daughter, Miss Roletta Armstrong, when his spirited horses took fright, at the hearse heading Mrs. Mary Worth's funeral!

"The old banker was thrown out in the runaway and his head fractured, while the young lady escaped!

"And so, two of the oldest settlers were buried within four days of each other. The whole country was in mourning.

"They say Coffin has left all his wealth to this beautiful girl, whom he almost picked up!"

Hiram Worth drained a glass of brandy as the babler went on, reading of the departure of Starbuck's fleet and all the village gossip. His iron nerve was shaken, at last!

Suddenly, Worth sprang up crying in a choking tone, "I'll leave you a letter with just what I want you to do on your return! Here's a hundred extra!

"I'll send you all the cigars that you need! I've got to go off to my ship!"

Hastily fixing a future meeting, the disguised traitor was rowed off to his ship!

For three days, he shut himself up with the bottle, and then emerged, looking ten years older!

"Rich, powerful, and the first lady in Suffolk! I can go back now!" he groaned. "For, I can easily fool Jabez and Mehitabel!—They will believe me! But, I could not look into my dear mother's eyes and, lie! Thank God, she died in peace and plenty—Died, still believing me true!"

And, but one thought now harassed him!

"No one can know anything but that brute Hugh Allerton!"

The certainty that a fortune of fifty thousand dollars now awaited him, in the careful hands of Jabez and Mehitabel,—gave him a fierce unrest! For he was his mother's legal heir.

"If Allerton comes back from Bombay, he may get a knife under his ribs, some dark night! With him out

of the way, I would be safe! I could go home then, and hold my head up with the best of them! I can tell a story to fool them all!"

He was making easy money now, rapidly too, in the double ended smuggling, and, as his pockets filled, his pride rose!

"I'll set a trap for this English lubber!" he mused.

Rum had calloused his conscience, and after one murder, he saw the way to the other, with no thrill of horror!

It seemed to be a necessary outcome of the tragedy in the Ochotsk!

And in some dim way he felt bound to avenge his dead mother, slain by his own treason.

As he sailed back to Liverpool, he revolved a hundred different schemes for Allerton's taking off! He never suspected the dispatch of the honest Briton's letters!

He little knew of the real cause of Zenas Coffin's death!

In driving out to view the Hilliard estate,—destined soon to come into the market by Mary Worth's death,—the old millionaire had only followed the private advice of Jabez Simpson, always eager to curry his favor!

The thrifty Jabez had called at the bank to say that a ten thousand dollars bonus over the thirty, would bring a deed from Mehitabel and himself, as "joint heirs" under the will of the departed Mary Worth!—And both heirs were thrifty and wished to get Zenas Coffin's fancy price.

And thus, even in death, the gentle woman had avenged herself on her arch enemy!

Zenas Coffin was destined never to own the historic "Hilliard place," in which he had once hoped to set up Roletta Armstrong as his son's wife and the Queen of Suffolk!

On his return from Liverpool the cunning Hiram Worth laughed over the ruse which he had hit upon at the English port.

A carefully worded letter, written in the hand of a

sly woman whom he had picked up in a Liverpool music hall,—was sent out to Funchal, by the agents of the *Dunedin Castle*, in the hands of a Captain of their line, with orders to stamp and mail it,—at Funchal!

The sealed letter was directed to "Captain Jabez Simpson,"—Cold Spring Harbor,—Long Island, New York.

Its words were brief, but pregnant with meaning to the old retired whaler.

"The man whom you think dead, as having been murdered, at Funchal, year before last, was only beaten, robbed, shanghaed, and forced to serve, on an outgoing ship! He has been restrained, in fear of his life, followed and kept away from America, to shield others. But, he can be saved!

"Advertise in 'Lloyd's Newspaper,' guardedly, for him, and he will see it, and so, get home to you, in some way. I am in risk of my life to write this! Advertise,—help him,—he needs money to escape, and then, he will come back to you, in time! I am a woman who knows of his kidnapping! Do not try to find me! This is my only letter.—Hiram W.—is alive,—struggling to escape from those who took him a real prisoner,—to suit their own ends.—*I dare write no more!* Help him, for God's sake! Put the money in the Bank of Havana."

A few boxes of smuggled cigars had easily arranged this,—with a clerk at Liverpool, and, though balked of meeting Allerton, still sailing on the Bombay run,—Hiram Worth knew that Jabez Simpson would now hold his estate intact! Both love and fear would effect this.

"I can defy them all! No one will ever know that I was the last traitor of Long Island! As for Jasper Coffin—he is quietly clinging to his kedge anchors, out there, in the icy Ochotsk Sea!

"I can go back safely, when I can make a good re-appearance.

"But, Jabez will hold on to the property and he and dear old Mehitabel,—will easily swallow any story! -

"My appearance will prove my past suffering, but, I will bloom out again, under Roletta's eyes!"

A fierce craving to be near her, became now the ruling passion of his existence!

With a sullen wonder, on his return to Havana, he learned of the assumption of the name of "Coffin," by Roletta Armstrong,—under the will of the millionaire who had left her every stiver of his wealth. Considerably *over a million dollars!*

But, Hiram Worth, sneak and renegade,—knew not of the wild craving for vengeance which now filled the heart of the woman who was in very truth,—the Queen of Suffolk!

As Roletta Armstrong Coffin,—the sole heiress of the dead banker,—the village belle, reigned supreme!

Her mother and herself, now robed as mourning queens, "took up the running," and with the adroit conspirator from Fort Greene Place, Brooklyn,—became, at once, the wonder and mystery of the storied countryside.

Deep in Roletta's own heart burned the secret communication from Hugh Allerton! Her soul was aflame!

It opened her guilty eyes to the reason why Jasper Coffin, *alone*, had lost his life, of all the men who fell into the hands of the hungry corsairs of the *Shenandoah!* "First to get Allerton over here, at any hazard or expense," mused the vengeful heiress.

"Next, to bribe and overawe Bill Tarbox! To send Allerton and Bill back to Funchal, to get evidence, is the last step!

"This cunning scoundrel, Worth, will, perhaps, turn up, some day here yet! His mother left fifty thousand dollars! He is in hiding, watching, perhaps waiting, till the storm blows over!

"I'll spend a hundred thousand dollars to bring him to the halter. *He shall swing!*"

She had gone into a hysteria of passion, the result of unslaked longings, of a mere romantic attachment to the daring Volunteer Lieutenant, and, feelings of

vanity, heightened by the pride of place and the superb inheritance of the dead banker!

"The son killed my beloved husband,"—she mused, "and the dead mother was the innocent cause of the death of my more than father! I can wait, and so, I will bide my time!"

But with no delay, she sent an acceptance for five hundred pounds to Hugh Allerton to the Bank of Liverpool.

"Come to me, at once!" she wrote, "I am rich! I will guarantee you a Captain's pay, as my guest here!"

"And, five thousand pounds, if you can apprehend the man who slew Jasper Coffin! I will, then, deal with him, according to the Mosaic law!"

The relics of Jasper Coffin, all duly arranged, were the objects of her daily devotion, as with "closed doors," the little coterie reigned far and above the squirearchy of old Suffolk!

But, Hiram Worth, fondling his great dog, "Pribiloff," cheerfully cried, "Old fellow, we will take a voyage, by and by! You shall be the guardian of the Hilliard House!"

"I will set up there, as 'the country gentleman!'"

Worth was now ready to shed the useless mask of "William Walsh," and yet, with his Second Officer's papers, he felt the usefulness of the disguise. He had got an honest rating.

"There's always that damned Allerton! If only I had him out of the way, the last rat hole would be stopped up! I'll watch for the 'Lloyd's Newspaper!' It is in every marine coffee house in the world!"

"Poor old Jabez will bite at the bait! And, I can with his help fool them all! Yes! Everyone!"

He did not know yet the fury of an aroused woman's heart!

His blood would have boiled to know the memories of Jasper Coffin's brief reign as lover and husband, which left Roletta quivering with her pallid cheeks aflame. For her pride had awakened all the dormant passions of her nature.

But, cautious still not to betray himself, "William

Walsh" soon suggested a plan of beginning an illicit traffic at New York, in the smuggled cigars which were the basis of a growing fortune, at that time of enormous duties.

The greedy Captain, only, bade Walsh to wait until both the Liverpool and Havana backers had been consulted as to the extending of their smuggling operations, by means of the schooner *Restless*.

The scheme was to take the precious cigars, in bulk, to Long Island Sound, and there unload them on smacks, to be directed by the acute Hiram Worth.

The schemer laughed, in glee, as he heard that Bob Hilliard, the broken spendthrift, had been allowed by Jabez Simpson and Mehitabel Wardour, to remain in the fine old colonial mansion of his family, as "caretaker," pending a satisfactory sale.

"With a good ten ton sail boat,—my natural amusement,—and Bob to aid me, I can handle all the landings in good shape," mused Worth.

So, he brooded, daily, over his future plans, as he made the return voyage to Liverpool.

"Pribiloff" and his master were now the terror of the *Dunedin Castle*, for, the Ishmaelite's hand was lifted against every man! The Ishmaelite's harvest was yet to come!

He had sown the seed in the blood of his enemy,—in the tears of the woman whom he now passionately craved,—and, in the vile treason which had forever obliterated his dishonored name!

Dupe and pirate no longer,—he had graduated in the roles of traitor and murderer, and, with his fierce dog at his side,—he mused, with deliberation, upon the assassination of Allerton; to hide from all men the shame under which he writhed in secret!

BOOK III.

THE ISHMAELITE'S HARVEST

CHAPTER XVII.

ROLETTA COFFIN'S ENEMY!

It all seemed to work out so nicely, that Hiram Worth decided, in his heart, that the Devil was the only keeper of accounts and, that he never forgot his friends.

It was in blazing August, that the *Dunedin Castle* ran, again, into the sweltering cove of Havana, where the *Restless* then lay half loaded, off the Regla warehouses, with her cargo of sugar and leaf tobacco for New York.

The syndicate of nefarious capitalists had agreed to trust "William Walsh" with the preliminary run of smuggled cigars to New York. The "war duties" had raised the retail price of the good Havana cigar in New York to fifty cents and one dollar each, according to the brand! Even the seconds and thirds sold for twenty-five and forty cents!

It was a queer association in villainy! The Liverpool conspirators were all smug staid men, who wore Prince Albert frock coats, top hats, and paced solemnly along to church with their prayerbooks in hand! Men in whose mouths butter would not melt! The old notion, "quod fecit per alium," protected these sly Chadbands!

But, their Havana colleagues were all men of a cold disregard of every commandment!

Fierce, lithe, with glittering furtive eyes, they

haunted the Hotel Inghilterra, and the Prado, with the staff officers of the great Governor General Concha,—men who had often run in cargoes of “living black ivory,” at a profit of half million dollars divided generously with the official ring who winked at the moderate villainy of cigar smuggling.

One Liverpool confederate had been told off to accompany the disguised Hiram Worth to New York on the first run, and, to there await the orders of the “Syndicate.”

A second keen eyed rascal was to be selected by the Havana partners to go as a passenger and aid Hiram Worth in marketing the goods, a trusted expert who had made many a “run” on that arch smuggler steamer, the *Santiago de Cuba*.

It was the ex-whaler’s devilish craft which proposed the old Hilliard mansion as the safest hiding place of the rich goods, —to be “run in,” on a new plan!

Having duly corrupted Bill Waters, the second mate of the *Restless*, it was arranged that “William Walsh” was to take Waters’ place as second mate of the two hundred ton schooner, while, Waters went on to New York on the steamer, to aid there.

A secret conference with the Havana agents of the *Restless* had reassured the “cigar smuggling” principals! The *Restless* like the golden rule in the proverb, was “to work both ways.”

And so, while the moneyed circle arranged all the details, over a good dinner, Hiram Worth and Bill Waters sat together in Joe Otero’s little restaurant, while Worth eagerly scanned the columns of Lloyd’s newspaper.

He uttered a shout of joy as he read the guarded advertisement.

“Hiram W. One thousand dollars American gold, placed to your credit in Bank named, under designation given. Use it to send secret agent. Will come down and help you away. Mother dead. All property safe for you. Risk nothing! Come home secretly, if you can escape. Secret is guarded here. No suspicion. Jabez S.”

“This is great! Grand!” chuckled Hiram, tossing

the half of a steak to "Pribiloff," who was watching every morsel eaten with true canine envy.

"Now, I can show my good faith by putting up my own money in the venture. But you, Waters, can become a rich man in five years! See here! This man has a splendid boat, the *Falcon*, a ten tonner. He knows every inch of the shore from Sag Harbor to Oyster Bay! We will run into the Race, past Montauk Point, as if driven out of our course by errors of chronometers.

"You, going ahead, with my letters, can arrange all, with my friends.

"I'll send one letter open, which our people can all read, and the other, sealed, by you, to be given to the man who will take off our cargo. He will also take me off and the two agents and you, my boy, will be on the *Falcon* ready to meet me! It all seems providential!

"When you get to Cold Spring Harbor—this man will hide you in an old mansion where no one dares enter, and Bob Hilliard, the caretaker there, will be the third member of the crew of the *Falcon*."

A day sufficed to prepare all the documents, and then, with the "pious prayers" of all concerned, "Bill Waters" left Havana, in the second cabin of the steamer *Santiago de Cuba*.

With a sagacity born of much intrigue, Worth's letter to Uncle Jabez was brief, but it gave to Bill Waters, the open sesame of the avaricious old sailor's heart.

Not a word of explanation of the hiatus in his life was hazarded, for the magic words that there was "big money ahead,"—ensured not only Waters' welcome but the "slaying of fatted calves" for the world wanderer.

"You can say to him that to protect others, I can only tell him all, when we meet! He will understand. Show old Jabez a ten dollar bill, and, he is as cute as the Chief Justice of the United States."

Hiram Worth exacted that only Waters should know the details of the landing scheme.

"As for me," he said, boldly, "your two men can

blow my brains out if I deceive them. I take my life in my hand!—After the first run,—I will stay there, and keep ten thousand dollars up, in the Spanish Bank here,—as a guarantee of my good faith.—For, my friends have property and they are all ‘on the make!’”

When Waters had sailed, Hiram Worth hastened, dog and all, to the *Restless*, and carefully examined his whole belongings. Not a scrap remained of the *Shenandoah* cruise, save the magnificent “Pribiloff,” and, some last spark of humanity forbade Worth to abandon the steel bronze beauty who now was madly attached to the moody traitor.

Even the old money belt was cast away! Furnished with English nautical papers as “William Walsh,” a native of Nova Scotia,—Worth now carefully examined himself in the glass.

His gray, grizzled hair, of a judicious length, framed his face, now wreathed in a half-cropped, full beard, with a sweeping Cuban mustache, giving him a Spanish air. The Castilian tongue was a convenient disguise, and, in his linens and panama hat, the black burned face, arms and hands, with the sun-scorched neck, gave him the appearance of a swarthy “peninsulare,” a true Castilian of the hills.

In venturing back to Long Island, the hardened brute, now reckless, feared only two men, the loyal old Bill Tarbox, and that Second Harpooner, Tom Dunstan.

“What can they do? They are powerless,” mused Worth. “My return with a money-making scheme, will cause old Jabez to silence Mehitabel! I can hide in the Hilliard mansion. Zenas Coffin is dead. And, the dead worry no one!”

“Jabez can handle the community, and my mysterious story will satisfy the only two human beings who could reproach me. There is but one living danger! Hugh Allerton! He must be fixed!”

He chuckled at the wit with which he had arranged to have every movement of the *Cygnets* reported to him, and he had set followers on to watch all Allerton’s movements.

"If by chance he should come to America, he dies! There will be stout arms ready to strike for me. I can tell the others that Allerton's a revenue spy, and,—they will soon finish him!

"A blackjack, a fractured skull, and then, the river! That's the pathway to glory, for the meddlesome English lubber! No! I am now invincible! And, Allerton really knows nothing dangerous to me. Everything connected with Jasper Coffin was destroyed in the fire, which left the *Favorite* a blackened, drifting hulk, till the auger holes settled her in the icy flood. We did our work well, we wolves of the *Shenandoah*!"

The victorious scoundrel forgot the fatal lapse of "that friendly bottle," and his drunken siesta on the deck of the *Favorite*, while Allerton rummaged the richly furnished cabin and saved the pictures and tell-tale letters which might put a hangman's rope around the whaler's neck!

The Devil, ever mindful of his own, had instilled into honest Allerton's mind both a shame of the cowardly cruise,—the necessity of confirming the log entries of the *Shenandoah* as to the capture of the *Favorite*,—and the burly Briton, now also a second officer,—cared not to lose his mate's certificate and rising career, and, perhaps stand trial as an "escaped English subject," who had broken "the Neutrality act." There was a long period of "transportation" hovering over Allerton should he begin an English inquiry into the murder of Jasper Coffin.

"I am safe, *safe*!"—growled Hiram Worth, "but, I could be hauled up in America. We were both American citizens! But, they have no proof, without Allerton! And, I'll block his game!"

It was on a September day of sixty-six, that Hiram Worth, with the fierce-eyed "Pribiloff" at his side, watched the old lighthouse on Montauk Point, as the *Restless* smartly drove by, making for the Race.

Two long years had passed by since Gardiner's Island, Plum Island and Block Island had dropped down behind the scudding *Reindeer*.

A dull resentment against Society, as a whole, had

succeeded to the nightly visions of Jasper Coffin lying on the cabin floor with his fair hair dabbled with blood.

"They all betrayed me! I only struck back!" growled Worth. "I have picked off two, but, the last one, is left to deal with."

He did not know that he was but wax in the hands of the woman who now panted to track him down, and see a halter around the neck of the man who had been her "first means to an end" in life, her social elevation.

Thin-natured, vain, crafty, but, bold, cold-hearted and far-seeing, Roletta Armstrong, now the mistress of a vast fortune, saw a coronet hovering over her brows, when she had been duly "polished up," to the surface glitter of the caste of "Vere de Vere." She yearned for rank, now!

Her barren victory, in rustic Suffolk, was the boomerang scorn of those who took a mean revenge in sneering at her as an "upstart."

But, wisely determining to leave her humble mother, as an anchor, at home, the lovely widow, whom all fancied yet a guileless maiden, had made her plan to seek social fields where every dollar would tell its own welcome story.

She knew well that Zenas Coffin's gold and a heavy donation to the church had sealed up the secret of her unacknowledged marriage. Beyond Tabitha Tarbox, whose presence was her only support, no one knew save the two women who depended on the "budding aristocrat," for the luxury which they now revelled in.

Roletta Coffin's "polishing" went on, daily.

The mother and aunt were also "living up to their blue china," with a daily increasing hauteur.

But, practical details chased every thought of the heiress of Zenas Coffin out of Worth's mind, as the sly Captain gave the schooner over to his trusted mate, "William Walsh."

By morning, the *Restless*, running wing and wing, was racing down the Sound off Orient Point.

The *Restless* carried a signal with her three Register letters flying at her main peak, and, glass in hand,

Hiram Worth eagerly watched for the *Falcon*, flying the private signal of the "Castle Line,"—stolen from the ship's flags,—a blue star on a white field. Waters had taken this ensign with him.

All day, the familiar shores floated by, and Hiram Worth anchored the *Restless* within a mile of the beach off Peconic Bay, to await daylight, so as to cautiously run down the Sound.

It was off Wading River the next day, when the sturdy *Falcon* was seen beating up along the shore with the agreed-on signal duly set. And then, only Hiram Worth gave vent to his secret joy!

For, he knew now that Bill Waters had fulfilled his mission!

It was just before sunset, when the *Falcon* ran alongside and old Jabez Simpson, haggard and anxious, stumped past Hiram Worth with no recognition, and went down into the cabin.

"It's a good sign," growled the returning traitor. "*The old man does not know me!*"

Down in the dingy, gloomy cabin, Hiram grasped the old man's hands in silence.

"My God, boy, how you have changed!" cried the retired whaler.

"Say nothing! None of these fellows must suspect," said Hiram, opening the brandy locker.

In ten minutes the stout schooner was anchored for the night, while Bill Waters and the two fellow conspirators, with Bob Hilliard, were ready on the *Falcon*.

After midnight, the cat-rigged yacht made five trips to the shore, where the steam oyster boat of a chum of old Jabez received and hid away the ten thousand half boxes of priceless cigars in her hold. The first landing was a success!

Jabez Simpson and a man from the *Restless* navigated the *Falcon* down to Cold Spring, while the oyster boat paddled along, within easy hail.

But, on the morning train to Huntington from Wading River,—Bob Hilliard, Hiram Worth and the two secret agents safely regained the Hilliard mansion,

driving over in a wagon from Greenlawn, to avoid the villagers' notice.

"Here you are, Hiram, in your own house," cheerily said Bob Hilliard, as he roused up an old crone who set out cold meats and the oldest Medford rum.

"Yours, Bob, as long as you live!" cried Hiram, when they had slaked their thirst.

"If you'll follow my lead, you'll soon have all the money that you want."

"I'll follow you to hell," energetically cried the ruined heir of the Hilliards.

And so, with the glittering-eyed "Pribiloff" at his side, Hiram Worth entered upon his crowning career, as "the new Suffolk Squire."

While the two confederates slipped away to New York City by the first train, to arrange for the removal of the smuggled goods, Bob Hilliard and Hiram Worth held high revel in the deserted mansion.

The renegade murderer was careful to make no reference to the woman whose altered fortunes now busied all tongues, and so, he listened to Hilliard's babble, as the heavy-set, black-browed collegian told all the gossip of the last two years.

Not a hint of his wandering escaped Hiram, as the two men ran over all their early days.

Hilliard's besotted mind was only intent upon gaining easily won gold, and, the secrecy of the enterprise veiled any question as to Hiram's journeyings.

"We can only succeed by disguising my presence here!" harshly said Worth. "The man who betrays me,—dies!"

In the fair September moonlight, Hiram Worth climbed alone to the "outlook" on the roof of the splendid old three-story Colonial mansion.

Eight hundred acres of splendid land lay around him, rich in its splendid autumn fruitage. The murmuring voices of the summer night wooed the excited wretch to repose!

He drank in great draughts of the scented air, while the earth's teeming bosom lay open to the white stars.

"It's a royal property," mused the traitor, "and, one fairly come by!"

He traversed every room of the storied family stronghold. The belongings of the stately Hilliards were all intact, speaking of the unbroken prosperity of two hundred years.

Jabez and Mehitabel had been careful that no piece of plate, not even a linen press, had been rifled by the impecunious heir, who had forfeited his fair heritage.

The old crone, who kept Bob to his servant's wing,—fed him, and supplied him with drink,—was a faithful spy of the two "forehanded" ones, who had assumed the care of Hiram Worth's inheritance.

Before morning, two four-horse teams had delivered the rich haul of smuggled cigars, hastily packed away by the two men who were now sworn chums, and Jabez and his two drivers. In cases holding fifty boxes each, the cigars were stored away in an emptied ice-house, and the teams rattled gaily away.

Over the Medford rum, Jabez and the young man drank "Uncle Sam's health."

"He is a good provider, and an indulgent Uncle," smilingly said Bob Hilliard, who now saw a couple of thousand dollars in sight, as a reward of his surrender of his honesty.

"This joke cannot be repeated, too often," gaily cried old Jabez.

"Bob, you and I and Hiram, can run things here, while the other men do the Havana trip," joyously cried Jabez.

"Next time, we will meet the *Restless* over by Great South Bay, so that no one can track us. I've got a hundred empty apple barrels ready to pack our goods in. But, we're safe on Long Island every time! No one dares to betray us!"

Worth slept late in the day, under the careful watch of Jabez Simpson, who gazed with pity on the haggard face of the altered man.

"Hiram, my boy," he said, when the returned pirate awoke with a start, "I will bring Mehitabel over, to-morrow, to see you, or, rather, send her! You know

what women are. Tell her nothing! You've had a terrible hard time. I can see that! We will fix up the whole matter of the estate, by turning you over all the money, and secretly assigning the foreclosed mortgage. No one need to know, especially in view of your new deal, that you are here. There's only Bill Tarbox and Tom Dunstan of the old gang now here. As I have to deal with Avery and Andrews,—tell me nothing! You're back, that's all. And, as I take a drop,—now and then, I don't want to know! I might babble!

"As for Mehitabel, trust nothing to her. She's a woman! They're all the same, boiling over with curiosity."

And so, the devil laughed to see how fortune favored the so far unsuspected renegade!

But, drawn by a feeling which he could not resist, Hiram Worth gazed out toward the splendid mansion of the young Queen of Suffolk.

"So, she goes away to Europe, this winter! Perhaps to remain forever! I must see her once, if I die for it."

The old fever of love was on him once again, the desire to see again that one still-beloved face, fair, if false, yet, still unforgotten.

Fortune favored the unrecognized Hiram Worth, who lurked for a week in the Hilliard mansion, until the whole dangerous consignment of smuggled cigars had been removed to Brooklyn, by the ready agents of the swindling syndicate, who handled their operations on the Havana steamers, tempted by the enormous war duties.

It had been a grand success! Thirty thousand dollars was the net profit, of which seven were given to Worth, five to Waters and Jabez, and two thousand dollars paid Bob Hilliard,—who now boldly assumed all risks.

The two emissaries sought a shelter on the *Restless* and the New York agents soon had transmitted their draft to Havana for division, and then returned to Hiram Worth his thousand dollars of caution money, in gold. The line was now open!

A secret conference of "all hands" decided that "William Walsh" should lie low at Hilliard's country home and have the whole supreme control of all the landings.

Bob Hilliard, ruined and dissipated, still retained his county prestige. "Once a Captain, always a Captain," is the old motto. He was "Hilliard of Hilliard's Hill," to the day of his death!

His wild orgies, the not infrequent presence of Moabitish women, had made the old Colonial mansion, "tabu" to the whole countryside. It was shunned as a moral Golgotha!

For, the local hypocritical descendants of old pirates, smugglers, freebooters, beach combers, and greedy Puritans, were all "whitened sepulchres, sanctified Pharisees," in public!

Tory and cowboy, refugee and loyalist blood, mixed with the uncertain strains of Long Island,—the rich sea island garden of New York,—where the crafty Dutch and the roving English adventurers, had struggled against the sly offshoots of the sanctimonious cult, which had slit the noses of Quakers, hung helpless men in the name of the mild-eyed Redeemer, and burned hapless women as witches.

But, Bob Hilliard, a dashing "Prodigal Son," had "publicly" offended, and so, his time-honored mansion was avoided,—and, he was nothing but a "caretaker" now! The whole community, eager gossips, knew of the thrift with which Jabez and Mehitabel had farmed out the Hilliard land, leasing it at high rates, to available tenants. They were true money-makers.

It was no secret that Jabez had leased his own snug farm and home, that Mehitabel Wardour had followed suit, and that the two "money lovers" and "joint heirs," lived, together, on the Wardour place, where a head farmer pushed every productive interest of the old farm. The two relatives were known to be "fore-handed and saving," and possessed of ample private means.

The windfall of the Hilliard foreclosure had solidly enriched them.

Since "the death of Hiram Worth," the two relatives had closely sealed their lips, as to all their affairs.

Both indulged the "good old gentlemanly vice of avarice" to the utmost, and so, Mehitabel Wardour, coming to the Hilliard place, without suspicion as a joint owner,—met her nephew, under the restraint of Jabez alone, that the "West India trade," necessitated his concealment of his presence.

The first surprise over, Mehitabel Wardour studied her nephew keenly.

"You'll chipper up again, soon, with rest and home comforts, Hiram," she said. "But, when you get this place back in your hands, you'll need a woman's hand, here."

The returned traitor frowned, as his resolute aunt sighed, "I s'pose there's no use of you makin' up to Roletta Armstrong Coffin now, again! La sakes! No one in Suffolk's good enough for her. She's got a New York lawyer as her trustee, in the Bank."

"What folly," growled Worth. "Don't you see I've got to keep quiet? No one knows me here, as yet. They must not!

"As William Walsh, second officer of a British ship, I got out of trouble, by my seamanship. Jabez has told you why I must continue to remain unknown! I want no wife!

"He and Bob Hilliard, alone know all. Jabez knows where his bread is getting buttered. Hilliard, I would send over to the poorhouse, if he ever betrayed me! How the devil did old Coffin come to pick up Roletta? She's a heartless devil!"

"They do say," whispered Mehitabel, with becoming prudery, "that old Zenas and Abigail were sweethearts, in youth! That after Zenas took Abigail's farm and place under his hands, he set his old flame up in good style in Brooklyn, with her sister, and he used to go down three times a week.

"He gave the money for Roletta's fine education and her settin' up, and, after the boy was killed by the pirates, he openly took the two home to his house, both mother and daughter.

"And so, at the last, he left all the money to Roletta, who may have been his daughter, who knows?"

"That's good enough reason for me, never to see her again," cried Worth, bringing his fist down on the table.

"No! I'll have no false-faced trollops around here! Bob has a knot of woman following. And, all you good women slander and gossip. I guess all women are much of a kind, anyway!

"No! I must lie low for two reasons! First, business,—and, besides, I don't want those I got away from, to know where I am! They would kill the fellows who helped me to clear out."

And so, after arranging for Hiram's secret visits, at night, to his old home, Mehitabel left her nephew to his new scheme.

"Something's come over you, Hiram," she said, studying him with unerring sagacity.

"I'm not the same man," he bitterly said. "And it's not my fault. Now, remember. I'm dead! *And, I stay dead!*"

"You must watch old Tarbox and this fellow Tom Dunstan. No one else could recognize me. The old whaling gang is all gone."

Over his brandy bottle, when the deluded woman left him, Hiram Worth debated his future course.

"Tarbox, Dunstan, Starbuck, know nothing of my relations with Roletta, save the old Captain, as to the three thousand dollars. Tarbox is bribed to keep his mouth shut as to the marriage. All favors me! But, I must be wary!"

He reflected upon the reports of Roletta Armstrong Coffin's keen business sagacity. Jabez had told him of her new secret relations with Starbuck, and her attending the meetings of the whaling syndicate. It was her own resolute mind which had sent all the whalers at once back into the Ochotsk.

"All the others are terrified by the raid of this Southern pirate," said she. "We will have two golden years to ourselves!"

That the girl had fallen heir to Zenas Coffin's love

of money was natural enough—it was the pride of an upstart!

Slowly, it came to Hiram Worth, that he possessed a powerful lever to constrain the young Queen of Suffolk.

"I, alone, know all the details of her marriage. But, Bill Tarbox only knows the gossip of his sister, a household slavey. I read the letters between Jasper and Roletta. What a fool I was to desert! But I can still reach her with my revenge. She dreams of Europe, of a titled marriage, of a high station!"

"Ambitious," said Jonas Starbuck. "Yes! She has captured the whole business."

In the county papers, which he now read with feverish avidity, Hiram had seen the death of the local clergyman who had married the woman whom he still desired, to the man who had died at his hands. Mehitabel's gossip as to Roletta's paternity merely amused him. "What difference,—anyways?" he sneered.

"The smart devil has allowed that story to gain credence, just to give a natural reason for her vast inheritance.

"She is a cool hand! But, I need not fear her! There is money for my silence, or else I can torture her, as she has tortured me.

"I can defeat all her plans. A titled marriage, in Europe. Yes, but, what could I prove? She might denounce me. But, what can she prove? It's a case of checkmate!

"Tarbox and Tom Dunstan know nothing,—nothing positively,—of the murder."

After potations which made him both audacious and sullen,—he decided to face the girl whom Fortune had cast up to the pinnacle of success by one gigantic wave.

"She can thank me for all this money," growled Hiram. "My pistol blew open the gates of Fortune, for her!"

And, suddenly, it dawned upon the renegade traitor, that his safety lay in pretending an ignorance of Jasper Coffin's secret marriage to the belle of Huntington.

"Starbuck never saw the letters which Tarbox stole and delivered to me, at Funchal! Tarbox will not dare ever to openly swear that he stole them! The old Captain knows nothing, even now, of Roletta's secret marriage.

"It's Bill's only hold upon Roletta, to support both him and his sister! I must ignore the secret marriage! It removes all motive for my killing Jasper Coffin. But, if she refers to it, I can then brave her as being a traitor. The return of the three thousand dollars to my mother, she can easily ascribe to old Zenas Coffin. My mother is dead. Nothing can be made of that! Died of grief—for her only son!" he cried, with a choking sob.

"So, I can safely ignore all. I will dissemble now and let her make the game! My revenge will be to blast her social career. She must either pay me or else, beg terms from me! I will have plenty of money from the *Restless* trips. We will have another schooner soon landing cigars off the coast.

"So, I can follow Roletta over to Europe, if I choose, for Jabez and Bob can run the 'shore end' of the smuggling here. Only one man do I fear. Hugh Allerton! In his hands, I would easily be this woman's victim, for she could arrest me for the murder of Coffin, on his evidence! If he ever crosses to America, he is a dead man!"

And so, Worth, under his name of "William Walsh," arranged for a weekly Liverpool letter, as to all Allerton's movements. The plea that Allerton had avoided a marriage with a woman relative of "William Walsh" was held up in the idea of serving papers on him at the convenience of that relative's lawyers.

"I'd like to serve him out with cold steel," growled Hiram Worth. "He alone can checkmate me." Allerton never knew how Worth had haunted the Liverpool landing dock, to arrange for his murder.

Lieutenant Vyse, in his kindly keeping of Allerton on the *Shenandoah*, and, then, smuggling him out of Liverpool, had really saved the life of the man who had enlisted the "traitor" into the Confederate service.

A fortnight passed,—while Jabez Simpson secured a substantial sloop to run around the Island to Great South Bay, and meet the returning *Restless*, which was ordered on this trip,—to hover around Babylon, and, to run into New York, direct,—after unloading her cargo of cigars, so light in bulk, so valuable, under the soaring war duties.

CHAPTER XVIII.

A BRAVE WOMAN'S DEFIANCE.

Two secret duties had engrossed Hiram Worth's evenings—the one to cautiously visit the old Wardour home, where the two servants were opportunely sent out, the farmer and his family living away from the “home place.”

He had noted the easy acquiescence of Mehitabel Wardour in the secret plans of Jabez and he had received the assignment of the foreclosed mortgage, duly.

There was, yet, the redemption time to run, however.

The return of his mother's cash accounts, and a duly executed deed of the Wardour homestead and farm, had been achieved at New York city, where “William Walsh's” account and valuables stood in his assumed name at the “Butcher's and Drover's Bank.”

The visits to the home place were not repeated, for there was the agony of passing the glaring new marble pyramid in the family graveyard, where the virtues of poor Mary Worth were set forth, in homely phrases. This brought an honest pang.

“Thank God, that she never knew my disgrace, that she died in peace, comfort, and honor, that she always believed me true,” mused the man who was now civilly dead.

Jabez was a safe agent, at Cold Spring, Huntington and Oyster Bay, and he had secretly conveyed to the

Hilliard home such articles as the haggard smuggler cared to use.

There, shut up, in the great "best chamber," with his huge dog "Pribiloff," Worth communed with his dark thoughts, drinking deeply, while Bob Hilliard rioted below with the women who streamed from Brooklyn and New York to help him spend his new windfall. Worth only laughed at this.

"It's the best protection for our business," sardonically laughed Worth. "All decent people will shun the old mansion, and this riot will keep Bob Hilliard desperate and always in my debt. I may need him later, also."

The conviction that all was not over, with Roletta Coffin, drove Worth half mad.

Thoroughly familiar with the topography of the grounds of the Coffin Mansion, the swarthy renegade had dogged the beautiful heiress on several of her excursions.

Always the mother or aunt, now full-blown "society dames," were with her, on these rides, but, from the coppice, splendid now in early October's gold, the traitor, with a beating heart, had often feasted upon the loveliness of the woman who had been lured away by old Zenas Coffin's gold, and snared by young Jasper's dashing graces.

He felt that he could now face the splendid woman calmly.

That he could restrain his knowledge of all her artifices and forge again links to bind them together, in a secret connection. The tide of life drew them towards each other!

"A match for you at any game, my lady, now," growled Hiram. "Some day, I'll meet you, alone. Then, we will see."

That he was a coward at heart, he knew, for he feared to encounter Tom Dunstan, but Jabez' careful reports showed him that the faithful Tom never left the home enclosure, where three lonely women lived alone—with so much undefended wealth.

A series of Long Island shore murders and burg-

laries had been only another evidence of the terrible demoralization of that long war which had corrupted every village and hamlet in the North.

To openly visit the Coffin home, would be to endanger his new traffic, to bring about a recognition which would drive him from Long Island, for, only Jabez Simpson could silence Starbuck, on his return, through their secret dealings, and Tarbox and Tom Dunstan, once alarmed, would soon force him to divulge his neatly pieced-up store.

Publicity might bring Hugh Allerton down upon him,—a man who could also fall back upon José and Portuguese Ann.

"If this devil of a woman followed me up, she could make me trouble. And, if she really loved that fellow, she might try to! Women are queer devils! Only a chance meeting will do the final business."

Unknown to his tenants, supposed to be only a boon companion of the ruined Squire, Worth was secretly looking over the boundaries of his new estate, in the early twilight, followed by the faithful "Pribiloff," when, turning the corner of an alder-shaded avenue,—the murderer suddenly stood, face to face, with the lovely wife of his victim. The woman whom he still loved!

A carriage halted, a score of rods away, awaited the young millionairess, who had sought a bypath to visit the farmhouse of one of her tenants.

Richly dressed, insolently beautiful, and all glowing with the pride of life, Roletta Coffin was merely startled at the appearance of a seafaring man.

But, the superb dog instantly caught her eye.

"Tell me," she said abruptly, "my man, would you sell that splendid dog?" She was still unconscious of his presence.

"Pribiloff" eyed the lovely figure before him, in wide-eyed wonder.

As Hiram Worth raised his eyes, the agitated woman started back.

"*You, you here, alive!* They told me you were dead, in a far off country!"

The blood had left her heart, in a sudden surge, and she glanced nervously at her carriage, where the coachman and footman, in all the splendor of livery, were still in full view.

"I have come back, Roletta!" said Worth, in a hollow voice. "Back to the woman who never wrote me a line! What care you for my wanderings, my sufferings? Oh! I know it all, the story of your windfall, your Aladdin's lamp."

A dozen crafty plans were now chasing each other in Roletta Coffin's mind.

Her deadly enemy was in her power. It seemed incredible! But, the Delilah of Long Island needed time.

"I wrote you to Honolulu, Hiram," she slowly said. "Long before I could have had an answer,—the news of your supposed death was noised abroad!"

Each of the two dissemblers knew that the other was lying, and yet, Hiram Worth was powerless to attack this quick-witted woman, no longer the girl whom he had left, uncertain of her powers.

"There was no letter for me, from Funchal, where you disappeared," Roletta sullenly continued, seeing her advantage. "You must have deserted your ship!"

Hiram Worth's brain, though dulled by liquor, was now working with its olden power.

"If Starbuck were only here, I could justify myself!" he slowly said.

"There is Tarbox," slowly said the heiress. "And, Tom Dunstan! Dare you face both your old shipmates?"

"The one a drunken old cook,—the other, a mere common sailor," sneered the enraged Worth.

"Both were your friends, chosen friends," severely said Roletta, "before accident raised you from First Harpooner to Third Officer, on your one lucky voyage."

"You are not the woman I left," angrily cried Worth, words of accusation trembling on his tongue.

"*Certainly not,*" coldly said Roletta Coffin. "I am

the richest single woman on Long Island and, honestly so!"

Worth saw that he had lost all power over this transformed woman.

"Yet, you accepted money favors from me!" he hoarsely said.

"From the honest man, I once knew," she calmly replied. "And, I returned the money with interest,—in good faith, on the news of your death! If you have not received it, I will now see that it is doubled. Jabez had it!"

Worth shook his head in a gruff negative, while the beautiful hound made friends with the lady. A grim silence reigned.

Suddenly turning on him, Roletta Coffin said, with flashing eyes, "Why are you here in hiding? What means this dress, this disguise? Your mother left you a comfortable fortune! Jabez and Mehitabel are rich! Are you the honest man who left me?"

Forced to the defensive, Worth saw that the child of strangely good fortune would defend herself with all a woman's art. He was no match for her!

"I am living quietly, with a friend," he hoarsely said.

"Where? With what friend?" imperiously demanded Roletta.

The carriage had discreetly retired over the hill, in view of this long parley.

"With Bob Hilliard," slowly said Worth, "and, until Starbuck's return, you must keep my secret. I have had a bitter experience. Powerful enemies might follow me! And,—until Starbuck's return, I must keep here in hiding, to save my name, my property, my future!"

"And, so you will not face Tarbox and Dunstan?" said the now triumphant woman.

"I will tell all to you, but only before Starbuck," was Worth's reply, driven to the wall in his defence.

"He will be away still for two years.

"I go abroad, soon," agnostically said Roletta. "I do not believe you! You hide something from me."

Already, in her mind, she had formed the plan to bring Hugh Allerton, at any cost, secretly from Europe. She thirsted to bring Worth to the gallows and, dissembled.

"Tom Dunstan shall go for him," she mused,—her blood boiling with the tidings of the honest Briton's letter. She dared not openly accuse Worth lest he should flee.

"I will never leave this fiend till I see the halter about his neck," she silently swore in her heart.

"But, Allerton must be here! Then, the arrest! It must be a stroke of lightning to him!"

Worth foolishly fancied that pity was struggling with pride in that sculptured bosom, now. Men have their foolish vanity!

"Hear me, Roletta," he said. "I was assaulted, robbed, and forcibly dragged on board the rebel steamer *Shenandoah*,—at Funchal.

"At the risk of my life, I was taken off on the *Laurel*, then beaten, and made a prisoner! We went over to the islands of Las Desertas. The brutes who kidnapped me, led by a fellow named José, gave out that I had been murdered!

"Forced to pilot the Confederate cruiser in the Arctic,—I saw the destruction of the American fleet, with tears!

"Our Captain was a cold-hearted tyrant, untrue to his flag,—his officers, and his crew. Thrown ashore, penniless, at Liverpool, I feared arrest! I shipped, as a sailor, on an English steamship, worked my way up to second officer, as "William Walsh," and, a chance advertisement in the "Lloyds' Newspaper" brought me back here! Jabez and Mehitabel have handed over my property! I never knew that my mother had made such savings. I own the Hilliard place now, and that is why I conceal myself, there! You know the frenzy about the *Shenandoah's* doings! Without Starbuck to justify me,—I would be assassinated, or mobbed, here! It is their advice to wait for Starbuck's return. Public feeling will have then quieted! Here the New Bedford people would doom me to a long imprisonment."

"You were on the *Shenandoah* when the *Restless* was burned,—when the *Favorite* was scuttled,—after the murder of Jasper Coffin? And, you aided such designs?"

Roletta Coffin stood transfigured in her rage.

Her eyes were now gleaming like an avenging fury's.

"Never!" he said, in a hollow voice. "Half insane, from ill treatment, I was prisoned in the sick bay. It was the natives in the Ochotsk who betrayed the fleet, for gifts of rum and trading goods. I knew nothing of the whole tragedy!"

"And you, a Northern man, served under the 'Stars and Bars,'—you, *the last traitor of Long Island!* Think how Nathan Hale died, for his native land!"

She was magnificent in her wild denunciation.

"I dared not speak to Starbuck, to Tarbox, or to Tom Dunstan," glibly said Worth, now resolved on his future course. "I would have been slaughtered. I feigned ignorance! They kept me under watch, and those men were all sent away on the *Milo*. I dared not speak to them. I could not write!"

"It is a year since the *Shenandoah* crept back like a whipped hound into Liverpool harbor!" cried Roletta.

"I feared to come home!" said Hiram. "Jabez clung to the hope that I might be living, and so, he advertised, continually.

"I came home! Believe in me, all can be, as before! For,—Starbuck will lift me up to honor again!"

Roletta Coffin faced him fairly. "I come of a loyal stock," she slowly said. "You are a man without a country! You could have deserted at Melbourne! You could have been sent home with the last prisoners, on the two ships sent down from the Behring Sea, to San Francisco! Ah! I see your villainy!"

"Listen! My heart has no place for a traitor! Yet, I will keep your secret, till Starbuck comes back, but you must not dare to approach me! The man whom I knew, the honest man, is dead! I will wait, but, only to see what part of your story is true. But, we

are strangers, till then! If you dare to intrude on me, in any way, I will make your presence known. Long Island will not even give a grave to a traitor! You would be hunted from America! I blame no Southern-born man who fought for 'Dixie,' but you, you,—there are three hundred thousand graves of loyal men in blue,—a ghastly barrier now is between us! Choose, now! Silence and safety, or, the scorn of the public, the vengeance of the men who saw the ships all go down, under the guns of the *Shenandoah*, and the torch of the brutal conqueror of thirty-eight unarmed vessels."

"I can clear myself, Roletta," Worth groaned, writhing under the spell of her beauty. The wary woman only wished to prevent his flight until Allerton could arrive.

"I do not believe you," said Roletta Armstrong, in a ringing voice. "But, I would not condemn a dog, without a fair chance, for the truth! I will wait! Stay here, but, keep out of my sight! You are dead to me, yet, Hiram, only to know you are not a traitor, a voluntary Judas, I will give you this reprieve, for the sake of the man who could, once, look at the flag flying over him, with honest eyes!"

Striding away a step, she said, "You will have later to face Tarbox, Dunstan, and all the crew, for, I know Starbuck's real character! He is a secret partner of Jabez! Both are crafty men, and your money might blind Starbuck! And a man,—who will sell his country, will also buy his friends! I know now where you got the filthy gold which has paid for the mortgage, which turned poor Bob Hilliard into a serving man, in his own home!"

She was gone, leaving Hiram Worth petrified with astonishment.

He never raised his head, as the carriage rattled away.

But, sneaking home in the gloaming, he saw the way to a new vengeance.

"I will pretend to submit," he growled, "but, I will dog her to Europe. And, by the God who made me,

I'll drag her down, to a vile disgrace. She is far too able, to take the two old women with her.

"When the cup is the sweetest,—I will dash it from her lips, and then,—I'll see her, at my feet!

"If she plays the hell-cat, then, *she dies!*"

For, he saw rightly that not even, in a century of pleading,—that stony heart would never melt again, to his passionate prayers.

"My lady," he cried, that night, as he drank his brandy,—with a trembling hand, "I'm on the road of Life—and, you may soon meet me!

"First, Allerton must die—after that, if she attacks me, I'll wrench that ivory neck from her shoulders, if I die for it!

"God! How beautiful she is!" He writhed in his mad passion.

He would have started up, in the frenzy of flight, had he known of Roletta Coffin's instant departure for New York City.

"An agent shall go to Liverpool and get Hugh Allerton, here, at once," she resolved.

"Money, thank God, will do that. And as for Funchal, there is old Tarbox! I will draw him out! He will tell me the whole story. He shall be kept in ignorance!

"This fellow Josè Oliviera can be brought here! With Allerton's evidence, Josè and Tom Dunstan, I can hold this dog, safely, in prison,—if needs be—till Starbuck returns.

"And then, he shall go to the gallows!"

Such was the maddened woman's decision. "He lied to me,—lied, with the blood of poor Jasper still red on his hands! I'll deceive this cowardly brute, for, he will trust me! I'll fool him, to the top of his bent. When he thinks that I am relenting,—the click of steel on his wrists, shall be the prelude to the march to the gallows!

"And, I'll go abroad, while he awaits his trial, for, Jonas Starbuck shall swear straight or, I will impoverish the old scoundrel! He is in my power, thanks to dear old Zenas Coffin."

And, so, a hollow truce kept these two deadly enemies, in an armed peace,—within sight of each other's homes,—each waiting for a new cast of the dice, in the game of Life or Death!

CHAPTER XIX.

A CHANCE RECOGNITION.

The bleak winds of early November were whistling around the wooded hills of Huntington, before Jabez Simpson had achieved his successful meeting with the *Restless* on her second voyage.

The stout forty-two ton sloop *Spray*, manned by Bob Hilliard, Jabez and a couple of the amphibious farmhands of the old ex-whaler,—rounded the Race, running homewards in triumph, as the *Restless* stood in from Babylon direct to New York City.

Along a shore where every man, who lived by the labor of his hands, spent half his time on the sea or Sound, these movements of "Uncle Jabe" attracted no attention.

No man, worth the name could be found, who could not "hand, reef and steer," as well, as mow hay, cradle wheat, or, "do the varied chores," of a farm.

The new Squire of Suffolk was not recognized in the sun-scorched man who carefully watched the home depot at the Hilliard home, always heavily armed. Hiram Worth avoided all society.

A Cuban lad, a keen-eyed half-breed, furnished by the New York partners, now watched every movement of Miss Roletta Coffin, old Bill Tarbox and the sturdy Tom Dunstan, who was the major domo of the Coffin mansion.

Hiram Worth, still masquerading as "William Walsh," nightly entertained the Havana junta of smugglers who ran up and down to Greenlawn, being always met by the trap from the Hilliard home.

A negress who only spoke Spanish, had reinforced

the old crone who had watched the mortgaged mansion to prevent Bob Hilliard burning it in his cups. Worth wished no local spy servants.

And, the furtive-eyed Cuban boy spoke to no one but to Hiram Worth, fearing the heavy hand of the morose sailor.

There had been no obstacle to the second successful run of the smuggler schooner and Hilliard, rejoicing in his second private dividend, was busied with his draggled Aspasias, when Hiram learned that Bill Tarbox had been obliged to throw up his job and go down to a Brooklyn hospital for the winter.

Advancing age and "John Barleycorn" had played havoc with the old man's giant frame, and yet, he had a fair excuse,—for his disappearance. Worth was ignorant of Roletta Coffin's schemes.

Tabitha Tarbox remained, dozing over her pipe, in the comfortable storekeeper's home, where Bill's mate easily watched the long row of whaling storehouses on the west side of Cold Spring Harbor. It was a practical sinecure.

Hiram Worth was now in a fever of indecision! He saw no direct benefit in forcing himself further upon the young Queen of Suffolk, nor, in openly announcing his return. Explanations of an awkward kind would be in order!

Time levels many rough asperities, and Hiram, the undiscovered traitor, feared to again encounter the diamond wit and high scorn of the woman who had once passively permitted him to love her, "faute de mieux."

Worth's neglected education had still left traces of sound mental methods and fair judgment.

"She is the unfolding rose," he mused. "Her course is onward and upward—mine, has been downward!"

He saw now the fatal mistake of his life! By stealing away from Très Palmas Bay, the fast-sailing *Reindeer* could have made the Arctic, forty days quicker than the *Shenandoah*, which was forced to coal, repair, clean bottom and take on supplies several times. The whole fleet could have been easily saved!

The command of a ship, and a fortune, would have been his!

For, every ship could have been run into the hiding places far beyond Behring's Straits, where the corsair dared not follow, having no ice captains, and, been hidden as the others were.

Kedging rig and all the appliances of the whalers were ready to fight the floes and fields. The machinery of the corsair would have been disarranged, her propeller perhaps torn off and fatal damage inflicted by the ice lifting which was nothing to the stoutly bulkheaded whalers, all sheathed in green heart elm. In other words, his villainy did not pay!

At last, he saw that the treason of Roletta was not to be laid at Jasper Coffin's door!

"I could have watched my chance! Struck him at night and, pitched him overboard! Old Jonas would have kept my secret, and the simple note, 'Man overboard,' on the log,—would have ended it. *The girl was not worth it!*"

He envied the dead man his record of loyalty, and hated him now even in his watery grave! Victorious even in death!

The "social columns," forerunners of the "blanket sheets" of to-day, soon announced the departure for sunny Italy of "Miss Roletta Coffin," "whose health had become seriously impaired, in the laborious settlement of her benefactor's immense estate."

That he, under any circumstances, would be ignored liked all the "hoi polloi" of the dreamy country side, was a self-evident fact, and Hiram Worth now looked for but two things,—safety first, and vengeance later.

Just what form his revenge upon Roletta Coffin would take,—he could not as yet decide. The coolness with which the spirited woman had smothered her marriage, was stunning to the lurking traitor. He felt now the power of her immense fortune.

Surrounded with her "intellectual staff," the young millionairess was impregnable to his present attack.

"I must wait! I will follow her abroad," he decided.

"I would only enrage her, if I thrust myself upon her, here."

But with his substantial fortune, and a fund of ten thousand dollars, already gained in the adroit smuggling,—he was free, now, to both follow her, and to break in upon her dazzling career abroad.

Jabez and Mehitabel were both, now, mere mute instruments of Hiram Worth's will, in view of the illicit golden stream, both of them considering it "fair game" to beat the government, "in any safe way."

The absence of Miss Coffin, at New York, "preparing for her voyage," a stay destined to lengthen into a couple of years, lulled the criminal in hiding, into a false security. He never suspected her catlike plans to trap him.

No wanderer was likely to approach the Hilliard mansion, while "Pribiloff" kept his stern guard,—and the home of the ruined prodigal was avoided with holy horror, by all the Pharisees of Suffolk County.

While Hiram Worth pondered upon the future, however, his secret enemy, Roletta Coffin, was busy, day and night, at New York.

A letter of Hugh Allerton, from Liverpool, had been instantly answered.

His proposition that he should take a six months' leave of absence, and come over to Huntington, "in mufti," under an assumed name, was coupled with the conditions that no one should know of his visit, and that a year's salary should be forwarded to his credit, to cover all contingencies, as he would lose his ship, and have to work up again, from the foot of the list, on another.

Startled at the possibility of Hiram Worth recognizing his enemy, and fleeing to the uttermost ends of the earth, the resolute woman, in those ante cable days, was unwillingly forced to await the slow action of the old fourteen-day mail steamers.

The funds were dispatched, with full orders for Allerton to report to her lawyer in New York, and the injunction was given him not to venture on Long Island's shores.

All this duly reached the Liverpool shipping house, but, unfortunately, only two days after the *Cygnét* had sailed for Bombay, on her return voyage.

But, the agents of the line, at once wrote to the vengeful woman that the important letters had been sent on by the overland mail, and, would be at Bombay, long before the *Cygnét* would arrive,—and, so then,—Allerton could come on, by the P. & O. steamers—in short order.

To await the arrival of Hugh Allerton, was an abandonment of the Italian tour, for the time, and, so—under the advice of her sly lawyer,—“Miss Coffin” quietly proceeded to Philadelphia, to hide there in a splendid private hotel, until Hugh Allerton should be forthcoming.

“To fix the identity of this guilty man, the evidence of Captain Starbuck, of this fellow José, is needed,” said the man of parchments.

“Allerton can establish the killing, with the two men whom, you say, saw this Worth enter the barricaded cabin, pistol in hand.

“Those men are both now with Starbuck on the new *Reindeer*. We must wait. Be careful not to alarm your enemy! Let him dream along in peace.”

“I will get José,” suddenly cried Roletta Coffin, springing up. “Tarbox must go over, there. Money will work wonders!”

The shipping lists showed a fleet fruit steamer sailing in a week, for Funchal direct, from Philadelphia.

The night before the departure of that vessel, Tarbox and the harpooner Dunstan sat long in council, in the “Waldemere,” in the City of Brotherly Love.

Tom Dunstan went over, a dozen times, the story of his suspicions as to the disguised attendant in the sick bay of the *Shenandoah*.

“Why did you not warn old Jason and myself then?” said Tarbox.

“Nice show I had!” cried Tom, “lying helpless there, with those Confederate devils around me, all a crew of gathered cutthroats. Hiram Worth was, always, a thorough goer! This fellow handled all the

medicines and drugs, and, there I was,—my leg in splints, nailed down helplessly on my back! Nice friends you and Starbuck were to me, to leave me to work my way home, around the Horn!

"If Worth was piloting those fellows to the whaling grounds, he did it,—for big money!

"One touch of a chloroform handkerchief to my nose, and then,—I would have gone off, like a smothered dog!—I don't believe Hiram Worth to be dead. His body was never found! And, a put up job could have been easily fixed up. He is as sly as a panther, that fellow, and I know, I know, that he recognized me and then played possum, so as to prevent being lynched, if he ever came home."

Silently listening to all, Miss Coffin cross examined Tom Dunstan, with no shaking of his obstinate belief.

"He had some old grudge against the ship," combatively said Tom. "I make it out that young Coffin was sent, at the last minute, to boss him, as First Officer,—a fine sailor, but, a man as didn't know a whale from a meeting house adrift."

Dunstan, now under secret orders to act as a weekly messenger between the heiress and her home, was given every caution by his mistress to prevent detection.

"I shall have my coming departure, publicly announced in the papers,"—gravely said his mistress, "and see that you keep a still tongue in your head! You are not to leave the house and grounds, save when you come to me, and, mark that you are not followed! Worth's relatives are a sly lot.

"If this man is really alive, then, Jabez Simpson and old Mehitabel are watching all of us for him, for, blood is thicker than water on Long Island."

Dunstan, ignorant of Worth's brutal murder of the capitalist's son, sped away on his errand to prevent the forwarding of letters and telegrams betraying the hiding place of the woman who was now playing a game for a man's head. Her policy was to use all her subordinates, keeping them in ignorance and trusting only her one lawyer.

CHAPTER XX.

BILL TARBOX' CONFESSION.

Left alone with Bill Tarbox, the unacknowledged widow of Jasper Coffin said sternly, "Bill, I know old Starbuck to be a smuggler, a liar, and a man untrue to his company. You know it too!—You did his secret bidding, for years! And, you are going, with my money to bring this José over here. You can see this 'Portuguese Ann' and easily buy the whole truth from her, so that José Oliviera cannot lie to us here. He was hidden in her house, this vanished man. How he got on the *Shenandoah*, whether of his own will or not, is one problem! You were on shore, with Hiram Worth.—I have always had an idea that something occurred at Funchal, which drove Hiram Worth to a sudden madness. You are in my power! I can discharge you at any moment! I can also stop your sister's pension. If I did, you would both starve!

"I will support you, and protect you, from Starbuck and his friends, if you obey me! I am the heaviest owner, now, of the whaling company's stock.

"Before you go, have you nothing to tell me? Is my money no inducement to you? Did not Hiram Worth lurk on shore to murder Jasper Coffin? You knew the bitter hatred between them as boys!—Tabitha is your sister! What has she told you?"

Suiting the action to the word, she drew out a pocketbook well filled with hundred dollar notes. The old sea cook's eyes glistened. His pendulous lip trembled.

"And, Miss Roletta, you'll protect me ag'in Starbuck? You'll not harm Tabitha?" pleaded Tarbox.

"I swear it!" cried the excited woman. "You'll not go to Funchal unless you tell me all. I hold the whole future game now!—By-gones are by-gones,—tell me all the truth, or I'll drive you and your sister out now, in the winter, and then discharge old Star-

buck when he comes home. Speak, or, I'll begin with you two!"

Her attitude brought the old fellow to his knees.

To save his sister, he lied at the last!—And, secure as to Starbuck, he made but one stipulation, "You'll never tell Starbuck what I'll tell you?"

"I have sworn it. Go on!" imperiously cried Roletta Coffin.

"All you have to do is to get the two men away from the new *Reindeer* and keep them out of Starbuck's hands. I know that he is a partner with this old eel Jabez in swindling the Company. All the captains do that! It is a whaler's trick!

"There was a fear that Jasper would take the ship, or get orders to command the whole fleet at Honolulu. Old Jason quarreled with Jasper who was high spirited and too quick!—Jason kept Jasper on the ship off Funchal, and sent me ashore to get the mail. Hiram Worth went with me. I had old Starbuck's secret orders."

Roletta Coffin grasped his arm till her nervous fingers nearly met in the old seaman's flaccid flesh.

She had listened to the old man's babbling, and felt that he was hiding something from her.

A new fear possessed her! The carefully arranged social debut in Rome, the city of all time, might be endangered.

"Speak," she cried, "I will pay you liberally. You shall be held harmless!"

"I got all the letters from the Funchal Postoffice, on Captain Starbuck's orders," reluctantly said Bill Tarbox. "He stayed on the ship, to keep Jasper Coffin from landing. He did not wish Jasper to get the new orders from his father, and the full powers from the Company and its partners at Honolulu. So, the 'old man' avoided Honolulu!—I got all the ship's letters there, on shore!—I steamed them open, at Portuguese Ann's house, with her help.

"I copied Zenas Coffin's letter to his son, and then, closed all up again. Jasper never knew that they were opened. The Captain delayed the son's letters in reply, by bribing the postmaster at Funchal. Jasper tried to

smuggle some private letters off! We captured them! And, the Consul delayed them, three months, so old Zenas could not write to Honolulu, our only stop!—” Roletta Coffin was now trembling in rage and fear!—*Her own secret was now in danger!*

“He came on shore, did Starbuck, and him, and Hiram Worth went over all the letters in the mail bag sent from the ship.”

“Is this all?” cried Roletta, a new thirst for vengeance taking possession of her.

“There was five letters, in a woman’s hand,” growled Bill Tarbox. “Hiram was nigh on to crazy for letters from some one at home. He got the five letters away from me. He read them all! And, two, he kept! The other three went to Jasper after being carefully closed.”

“Do you know who wrote those letters?” asked the young millionairess, with a feigned carelessness.

“No!” boldly replied the crafty old cook, with his eye on that well stuffed pocketbook.

“None of us knew the boat would put into Funchal, only old Starbuck and Jasper could have suspicioned that. Hiram Worth was like a mad man, when he read those letters! He went in for the women and drink, and it just turned him to a raging fiend!”

“Did you get any letters from Tabitha, there?” suddenly asked Roletta.

The long practice of a life devoted to artistic lying sustained Tarbox.

“How could I?” he simply said, “We was supposed to be off straight for Cape Horn, after the Bermuda cruise. We was to leave our stuff at the Falkland Islands, get fresh supplies and water and then make Honolulu, by the mid ocean voyage. We was all fooled! You see Starbuck was playing one hard game. Jasper, another! When Jasper came aboard at Sag Harbor,—it was a thunderbolt to us all,—and we were already standing out to sea. Old Zenas was a ‘world beater’ for craft, but, Starbuck got ahead of him. He is a fox!”

“And, the letters that Jasper Coffin tried to send!” asked Roletta.

"Starbuck kept Hiram on shore to open and copy for him, any letters that Jasper smuggled off the ship. And, I suppose, Hiram Worth destroyed all, for that gal who wrote the five to Jasper.—I know Starbuck had copies of all Jasper's letters to his father. The others, the Captain left to Hiram!

"As I never saw Hiram, after I went to Très Palmas, with Starbuck, all I know is dead or alive he got two of the gal's letters, stole outright, and then, read the whole five! What he did with the answers, or how many they was, I don't know! Hiram was always a jealous devil! He had it in for Jasper, who would have 'roughed him,' all the whole voyage!

"If those men had a met on Madeira's shores, there'd a been a murder of one or both,—right there. Old Starbuck was only a playing for peace and information, and to keep Jasper from taking his ship away! You know he works 'the private game,' as you say.

"But he's a crackin' good whaler, long ways ahead of any other skipper under his flag."

Miss Coffin was now busy with her bundle of notes. She counted out ten one hundred dollar bills.

"I'll see that Tabitha gets five hundred as a present, on my going away. Now, don't let this money be a curse to you," the heiress said. "I'll see that you never want!"

"What am I to do?" muttered the old cook, delighted not to be cross examined as to Tabitha's letter to him at Sag Harbor.—His face betrayed both cunning, fear and agitation. But, he now saw a golden pathway before him!

Rivers of rum, tobacco and cigars, ad libitum,—spending money—and a powerful friend. He hauled down the Starbuck colors forever! He became Rolletta's bond slave for life.

"She's a mighty smart gal," he mused, with a certain local pride.

"You are to have five hundred dollars at the ship for your passage to Funchal and to find this José.—There's a new American Consul over there, Mr. Van Deever, of New York. He will give you and José

a passage back. You are to have two hundred and fifty dollars, each, when the ship sails on its return. My lawyer will meet you here, in Philadelphia.

"Stay on the ship with José till he comes! José gets fifty dollars a month, and his board while here. Also, his passage home!—It's a fortune for him. Find out the whole story, how Hiram Worth was made way with. Why, and all about it! And, if you bring me that man José, you will never want for anything, for your whole life."

"This woman Portuguese Ann?" asked Tarbox. "She's no fool."

"She will get two hundred and fifty dollars in gold, from Consul Van Deever, if she finds José, tells you all, and, gets you both off on the return voyage of the *Decatur*," said Roletta.

"And, my orders?" said the happy Tarbox.

"To keep a still tongue, and to let Portuguese Ann know nothing of what I want José for. You can tell him, there's a lawsuit about the whaling voyage. Tell him little, till you get him out at sea! Once here, we will hold him as a witness and then, hustle him home, when done with him."

Dismissed in charge of her lawyer's head clerk, Bill Tarbox was put aboard the outgoing fruit steamer next morning, and the chief clerk went out in the pilot boat to see that Tarbox sent no letters off the vessel,—under Roletta's secret orders.

Long before Bill had reached Madeira, a tender solicitude of new birth for Tabitha's comfort had taken her back to the Coffin mansion, under the keen eyes of the mother from whom Roletta only hid the fact of Hiram Worth's recrudescence.

It was a night of agony and despair which followed Bill Tarbox's shuffling exit from "Miss Roletta Coffin's" rooms at the Waldemere.

"This brute Worth knows all," moaned the frightened woman. "He has some devilish scheme of his own. Even when he pleaded with me there on the road, he was lying! There may be murder in his heart! And, I dare not tell Arthur Manson of all this!"

It had been an accidental relationship with our last Legation at the Vatican, which caused the ambitious lawyer Arthur Manson to artfully lay out the social campaign in the Eternal City, of his wealthiest client.

The valuable business of this vast Coffin estate, the pickings of a "social sponsor" going to his fairly needy relative, the wife of an attaché of the Legation, the prestige of "Miss Coffin's" Roman splendors and the projected villa at Tivoli,—a charming place for an extended vacation,—all this made Manson anxious to arrange a brilliant Italian marital alliance for his social neophyte, so as to leave the handling of the American estate in his own hands.

"She can choose her mate, at will," mused Manson, "and be, Princess,—Countess, or Marchesa, for, Italy is overloaded with needy noblemen!"

It was before the days of the American Invasion, and the pro-Confederate feeling, still shut the salons of England and France to northern women, and, with Roletta Coffin, patriotism was the frenzy of her impassioned soul! She had been a Lady Bountiful to the returning soldiers.

But, the dawning day brought new counsels to the vigorous young woman. Falsely reassured by Tabitha's entire ignorance of the whole matter (as proven by Bill's artful lies), Roletta Coffin merely removed the old woman to her home, to prevent any babbling as to Bill's whereabouts.

Dozens of his gossips, anxious to see the old man, were vaguely informed that he had been sent South!—And, Tabitha herself was kept in ignorance.

"Tom Dunstan," mused the startled woman, "only knows that this detested traitor was alive on the *Shenandoah*! I hold Tarbox helpless in my hands.—Starbuck knows nothing of the real intrigue at Funchal or, my marriage! Fear will keep Tarbox away from his old Captain, whom I will lull by allowing his 'private trade' to go on, as long as he keeps silent.

"But, I will have Manson frighten him. He must be my abject slave. I can take no risks with him!

"As for the man who slew Jasper, he is at my mercy,

when Hugh Allerton, José and Tarbox are here. The price of Hiram Worth's silence, is his safety, the crafty scoundrel. But, once thrown in prison, he can not hurt me! And, I will not go over to Rome, until Hugh Allerton has given the evidence on which Worth can be arrested.

"A life imprisonment, or death on the gallows will be his reward. For, he cannot prove that he was regularly enlisted as a 'combatant' on the Scourge of the Arctic!—There is piracy and treason and a sure punishment to follow such a defense. He would not dare to try it!

"I have him now! But, this December and January waiting!—*Long, oh, so long!*"

While the woman, fanned to a frenzy of vengeance by Worth's capture of her lover husband's letters, plotted the downfall of the hiding traitor, Hiram Worth, secure now in his sustained incognito, was slyly digging under her entrenchments! He was both artful and deadly.

The two stolen letters, and three of Jasper Coffin's detained love missives, were now safely deposited in the steel vaults of the Butcher's and Drover's Bank, in New York City.

"To be burned in case of my death." Such was the endorsement in "William Walsh's" own hand. He was now a heavy depositor.

But, never deceived, even for a moment, by Bill Tarbox's sudden departure, Hiram Worth had used Jabez Simpson's skill, his influence over Tabitha, and, the adroit sagacity of his half breed Cuban boy.

Followed to the *Decatur* by the Cuban lad, Bill Tarbox, under guard of the lawyer's clerk, was easily traced to the outgoing steamer and the Clerk back to the "Waldemere," and thence to Arthur Manson's law office.

"Now, my lady, it's war to the knife between us," mused the enraged Worth. "What does all this mean? A systematic effort to find out all the mystery of Funchal! Or, to run down Hugh Allerton? Which? It means mischief."

He laughed the idea to scorn! "Allerton will never own his connection with the *Shenandoah*. It would lose him his rank on the *Cygnets*! He would be arrested as a fugitive from English authorities."

Hiram Worth, acute as he was, knew not what name Allerton was really mustered under! The officers had all called him "Gunner."—The crew, "English Hugh."

"And yet, something must have relieved Hugh's mind, if he dared to openly ship as second officer of the *Cygnets*, under his proper name!" So, mused Hiram Worth.

Worth was ignorant of Lieut. Vyse's kindly description of the escape of an American fugitive, name unknown. This generous ruse saved the gunner.

"They are after Hugh," moodily decided the traitor. "I will let my lady lay by, and make the game. But, how about Italy? This is some new ruse! She is covering her tracks."

Two weeks later, a tentative inquiry through the Butcher's and Drover's Bank, with regard to a valuable farm of the Coffin Estate, elicited the answer from Mr. Arthur Manson "that Miss Coffin was in Bermuda, for the winter, and preparing for a long residence abroad, her health being impaired."

"In the mean time, no real estate belonging to the absent client could be placed on the market, but, in a reasonable time, an answer might be expected," such was the sly response.

Jabez Simpson, now half the time an inmate of the Hilliard mansion, was kept in ignorance of Hiram Worth's destination on a two weeks' mysterious run.

With the Cuban lad at his side, the artful traitor explored the whole field of Miss Coffin's furtive operations.

That Counselor Manson went, once a week, to the "Waldemere," in Pennsylvania's somnolent city,—that clerks flitted to and fro charged with business matters, that "an invalid young lady" lived in seclusion and splendor at the "Waldemere," was easily ascertained.

From Jabez, he learned that no letters addressed to "Miss Roletta Coffin," none coming to her relatives, from Philadelphia,—were handled at the Huntington Postoffice, where the old whaler easily corrupted a gossiping clerk, with a few dollars.

"All goes to her lawyer," said the young official.

But, a keen examination of the shipping list and the Philadelphia Merchants Exchange records proved to Hiram Worth that nothing could reach Funchal quicker than the *Decatur*, whose return would be the first steam arrival from that dangerous point.

"It would never do for me to show up, there," gloomily decided the enraged scoundrel. "It's a battle in the dark! A case of no thoroughfare. All I can do is to await the return of the *Decatur*, for, Mrs. Jasper Coffin is holding back her hand for that! And, what is her little game?" He was puzzled.

"It may be she has hopes of tracing Allerton, through Tarbox, for no one at Funchal knew of Hugh's connection with the *Shenandoah*. She is crafty! She will use her money freely.—She means to give me up as a traitor and deserter, if she can prove it."

"Bah!" finally cried Hiram, "Allerton is the one man, the only danger! Dare I get over to Liverpool and, lay for him there? Murder!" he muttered, "is no light matter in England, and, Hugh, will be on the watch.

"If I should strike at him directly, it would be a death blow, for he would shoot me like a rat, if I lurked around him. Whom can I trust?" He was really friendless.

Even with all his money, with all his craft, he could do no more than to send on a special inquiry, under heavy reward, through the Liverpool friends in the smuggling scheme.

The "swift" Cunarders of that archaic state of ocean navigation took up nearly a month in bringing an answer to Hiram Worth's cautiously worded queries.

But, the hundred pound note had soon loosened the tongue of the correspondent of the Bombay Line.

It was after the New Year, when Hiram Worth

bounded to his feet in a rage, as he read the copy of the letter of instructions sent by Roletta Coffin to the Bombay agent to await the arrival of the *Cygnets*.

That some dire disaster was hanging over his defenseless head was the instant conviction of the startled scoundrel. "Damn her sly duplicity!" growled the ex-whaler. "She fears me, now! She has bribed Bill Tarbox! She knows now of the stolen letters! And, she has some deadly scheme on foot at Madeira.—She fears me and if she can not have my life, she hungers to railroad me into States prison! Wait, my lady, *only wait!*"

Desperate and at bay, Worth saw that he must remain and fight Roletta Coffin, at her own game, or else hide himself forever! It would mean a defeat for life, to dare to fly.

"True, Jabez Simpson would carry on the smuggling, in my absence, for all time," he mused, yet he saw that this woman's schemes meant to drive him out of the Hilliard place, where he had sworn to squire it openly, when old Starbuck had established his innocence. He now proposed to secure Starbuck.

He had already evolved a scheme to buy over Jonas Starbuck, and take him into the "Havana trade."

"Money, money, will do anything, now," he mused.

And then, his teeth chattered and he grew hourly afraid as he thought of Roletta Coffin's million, her powerful legal adviser, Arthur Manson, and his own possible lynching at the hands of a community impoverished by the *Shenandoah's* cowardly cruise. A disclosure might bring on a riot.

The letter from Liverpool showed the deepest craft.

A substantial draft signed "Arthur Manson" had been forwarded to second officer Hugh Allerton, with orders to instantly leave his ship at Bombay and report by the P. & O. steamer, and Cunard, at once, to Arthur Manson, at New York City.

The list of sailings and connections was sent on, and also a sealed letter of instructions.

"How the devil did she pick him up?" cried the affrighted scoundrel.

It came to him, at last, that the list of Masters' certificates of the Board of Trade would give Hugh Allerton's name, firm and ship.

"She has been working, in the dark, since our meeting," was the villain's fearful decision. "And, Allerton may have given her his directions how to secure final evidence at Funchal!—I will know how to deal with Bill Tarbox, damn him! He must be now blackmailing this desperate minded woman, hoodwinking her, and so making a nest for himself.

"But, Allerton, if he sets foot on American shores, must die! I can trust no one! It is my life or his, for he comes here to swear my life away. And, he will do it!"

A careful examination proved that the *Decatur* would return in the middle of February, while Allerton could not reach New York until the end of March.

"I will meet that steamer," mused Hiram Worth, who now saw the Ishmaelite's harvest stretching out before him, in grim terror. "Death, or life imprisonment, a grim choice," growled "William Walsh."—"Failing in my success in baffling her, there is left only flight! There's old Jabez, not long for this world,—Mehitabel, a helpless old woman, a mere money grabber and no one here to my hand, but, Bob Hilliard. He might take care of Bill Tarbox, but, I, alone, must handle Allerton!"

"Tom Dunstan knows nothing," mused Worth, "nothing of the actual murder. Old Waddell smothered it, as far as he could!"

"Starbuck, Tarbox and Dunstan were all away in the *Reindeer* when I killed that fool! Allerton once out of the way, the evidence of the two whalers in the *Favorite* who saw me go into the cabin, would be useless. They could never swear to the guilty man, crazed with our sudden attack as they were, but, Allerton quickly followed me into the cabin and saw me, pistol in hand, standing over Jasper Coffin's body! He knows too, damn him, that the fellow was unarmed, and that there was no real struggle."

The fear that he was being spied upon by Roletta

Coffin caused him to devise plans for a lengthened absence.

A change of residence, a different appearance, all this was forced upon him.

To let his beard grow again as well as his hair, to select a trusty sailor boarding house refuge of the better class in New York and Philadelphia, was Worth's instantly resolved scheme.

And, the pretense of a needed rest, from the inclement storms of the Suffolk hills, was a good excuse.

As a friend, a tool, he saw no one near him but Bob Hilliard, and of the prodigal's nerve and daring, he knew but little.—“If I show myself to Allerton or Tarbox, I am lost,” mused the wretched man, putting off from day to day, his final decision, though he watched the heiress incessantly, through his Cuban boy spy.

“They do not mean to risk Allerton in New York,” rightly decided the entrapped scoundrel. “They will hide him in Philadelphia, and, she will watch me. And so, I must disappear!”

It was a master stroke which decided him to confide in no one but Bob Hilliard! For, the ruined heir was now reckless!

The dark hint of a “woman entanglement,” and the arrangement of a meeting place with Hilliard at a Hoboken marine hotel, was all the effective work done by Hiram Worth, when, arming himself thoroughly, and taking abundant funds, he vanished, one night, from the Hilliard House, and going up to Greenport, took a steamer for New London, and reached Philadelphia by a freight steamer, from Boston. “I fancy I have thrown the hounds off—” he grinned.

So, day by day, in the waning month of February, in hiding with his Cuban factotum, he watched both the “Waldemere” and the dock of the *Decatur*, keeping in touch with the marine telegraph to the capes of the Delaware.

Muffled up, affecting the invalid, Hiram Worth drank fiercely as, with a wolf's ferocity, he watched for the arrival of the *Decatur*.

"What consignment of my enemies can be expected?" he asked himself a thousand times.

With all his sagacity, he never dreamed of the craft with which Bill Tarbox had drifted into the "Posada Braganza" at Funchal.

The startled "Portuguese Ann" had not been quick enough for the old mariner, who had before his appearance, easily sought out the pretty "Dolores" and exhibited to that simple siren, a purse of gold.

Over their wine, the two talked of the visit of the *Reindeer* and reviewed the mysterious disappearance of the handsome young whaler.

José Oliveira, easily secured by a moderate bribe given to Dolores, was astounded when the new American consul, with a guard of "guardia costas," took the startled siren and Ann's "right hand man," into a legal seclusion, at the Consulate.

Thoroughly awed by a visit of the Consul, in person, the frightened Ann, in the presence of Van Devere and Bill Tarbox, gave in legal evidence the whole history of the stay of Allerton and Hiram Worth.

She divulged the secret meetings with the Confederate officer, Paul Braxton, and, unbosomed the full confidences of José, as to how Hugh Allerton had taken off the American deserter on the *Laurel* with every detail of Hiram Worth's guilty connivance. His treason and desertion was fully proven beyond doubt.

Thoroughly armed with Counsellor Manson's full instructions, the official easily persuaded old Ann to trust her brother to the hands of Bill Tarbox for the visit to New York.

After two days of official pressure, the proposition that Dolores should accompany José to New York, both under the protection of the Portuguese Consul there—was acceptable. The double evidence would send Hiram Worth to prison for life, without Allerton.

The agents of the *Decatur* guaranteed the safe return of the bewildered "Dolores" and the excited José. And, the peasants were reassured by all these pledges.

Not even when Portuguese Ann had received her two hundred and fifty dollars, not even when "Do-

lores" had fitted herself out with a wardrobe of a hundred dollars, did the instruments of Roletta Coffin's vengeance suspect the parts they were to play, in a drama leading to the scaffold!

But, there was mirth and good cheer in the "Posanda Braganza" and, Inez sorrowed for the absent Allerton, while the coquettish Dolores looked forward to again meeting her moody young lover of the *Reindeer*, "A prince with his money!" Tarbox had most skillfully deceived her.

All the way across the rolling Atlantic, Bill Tarbox kept the bottle moving, while José and Dolores, blithe and gay, chattered in their corner, muffling up like Bedouins, as the steamer crept up into colder latitudes.

Old Bill looked forward to years of lethargic enjoyment, as the steamer slowly crawled up the icy Delaware to its dock at Philadelphia.

There on the dock, awaiting the party, was Manson's head clerk! But, it was a game of hide and seek!

Neither the clerk, nor the witnesses who were to deliver Hiram Worth over to the jailer, ever saw the disguised man with blazing eyes, crouching in a dark corner, who followed the party, as they made their way to New York City.

After they had crossed the ferry to Long Island City and all took tickets for Huntington, Worth sped back to Hoboken.

"She will hide them in her home, under the guard of Tom Dunstan and Bill," gasped Worth. He had given the boy orders to follow, and to bring Bob Hilliard to him, in secrecy.

"*José must die!*" he swore. "And, Dolores, I will steal away! Poor devil, she loved me!"

CHAPTER XXI.

AT MIDNIGHT IN THE HILLIARD MANSION.

It was nearly two o'clock at night when Bob Hilliard, carefully escorted by the glittering eyed Cuban lad, entered the room in the Hoboken hotel where Hiram Worth, with a devilish cunning, had taken to his bed under pretense of a severe cold.

The lad curled up on a lounge and slept while the desperate enemy of Roletta Armstrong Coffin "cleared his decks for action!"

Already, a physician of repute had been summoned for "Mr. William Walsh," a respectable seafaring man, who kept considerable luggage in the Hoboken hotel room,—engaged by the month.

He was popularly supposed "to have something to do about the wharves," the very natural sequence to a seafaring life.

Prompt pay, quiet conduct,—drinking and smoking liberally, but, only in his rooms, "Walsh" was now regarded as a "fixture" in the retreat which he had artfully used for two months.

Bottles of medicine and the usual litter of a sick room, betokened the care with which Walsh had prepared his mise en scene, as well as the frequent visits of the housekeeper and room maid.

But, glad to see Hilliard thoroughly sober by a message of import,—Hiram Worth leaped nimbly from his couch, and, unlocking his trunk,—began to quietly tone up his startled visitor, with a little Cognac.

"There's little time for talk, Bob," said Worth, as he sipped his own refresher. "We have to clear away a dangerous and deadly enemy! Our smuggling scheme is partly discovered! We must change our operations and I'll send for Jabez and head off the *Restless* and the *Onward*, on their next trips. We will change the route.—Jabez can take the schooner into Montauk Point Bay, where we have hired a farm house! We will beat the meddlers every time!"

"Who has betrayed us?" growled Bob Hilliard.

Thick set, muscular, his fine face beaming with intelligence, though disfigured with drink, the ruined Squire was a formidable enemy at thirty-three.

To lose his easily won gold now, was to drop down again to the condition of a homeless beggar, for, he knew well that Hiram Worth could turn him out, at a moment's notice.

Vain hopes of recovering his estate had gleamed out before him, under the exceptional windfall of the illicit cigar handling.

"Are you game? There are two,—*one* of these must be disposed of, at once. The *other*, I am laying for, here!" said Worth, his face convulsed with passion.

"Game for anything," cried Hilliard. "I'll stand by you, to the death! Tell me all."

"You know," said Worth, filling his glass, "that I keep shady here to prevent drawing attention to our operations. I have long feared this, since I met that upstart Roletta Armstrong, now "Miss Coffin," once a poor girl, on the road, two months ago.—I've made all arrangements with Jabez, and if they search the Hilliard House, they will find nothing. Jabez will be over here in the morning!

"And, by God, I'll get even with Coffin's natural daughter and legal heiress, this beggar queen!

"There's a dark faced Portuguese spy, a fellow named José Oliviera, whom this upstart woman has brought up from Havana, to give us over to the revenue officers.

"Ramon, here, followed him to the Coffin house, where Manson's clerk turned the Dago over to Tom Dunstan.—My affair is to lay out the other chap, an English steam boat mate, who was in the employ of the 'segar handlers' at Havana, and, who has followed up the *Restless* and the *Onward*. He proposes to turn State's evidence."

"What is the cause of this upstart girl's enmity to you?" growled Bob Hilliard.

Worth was all ready with his lies.

"Because my mother would not sell the old Wardour

place to round out the square of old Zenas Coffin's lands. He would then have the control of all the railroad entrances into Huntington. It was a hard blow to them!

"And, I naturally stood with Starbuck, in the quarrel with Jasper Coffin!—This Roletta Armstrong has her eye also on Jabez Simpson's block of stock in the whaling company, and she means by and by to crowd out Starbuck, Simpson and myself. She has inherited all Coffin's hatred of my poor dead mother, who refused him, when she married my father, Ezra Worth. It's no time for talk. A time for action!"

"What can I do?" sullenly said Bob Hilliard.

"Bob," huskily said Hiram Worth, "Jabez will look out for our 'money spinning.' This woman has a million behind her! She's a born devil, and is going over to Italy, to marry some titled dandy!—She used to be humble enough, when I 'sparked' her home from Sunday School. I know her hiding place here!—Get back! Take Ramon with you. He knows the man! I'll back you with ready money, all that you want!"

"Before Manson and Roletta can get hold of any other traitors, our business will be safely removed. Let Jabez handle that!"

"But, the first thing Tom Dunstan will do, is to steer this José over to spy on the Hilliard House! That's his game!"

"Use the little Cuban as a watch dog! There's a woman with José, a pretty girl, a poor dupe! We'll have Dolores as our own housekeeper, yet! She is as innocent as a pigeon! But, you must 'do up' this fellow!"

"How?" growled Bob Hilliard.

"There's only one way,—the club and the knife! No shooting, pistols are unreliable friends,—" darkly said the traitor.

"And, if I have to skip?" stoutly demanded Hilliard.

"Hold your ground! No one would suspect you of aught but taking a drop now and then!"

"Roletta will, of course, suspect *me*! I will come back there boldly! I can prove by the most reputable

physician of Hoboken that I was here! And, I will face her out! I know a secret that will send her, dumbly, away to Italy. I have a trap laid for the other one. And, I will handle him, *myself!*"

"What guarantee have I?" agnostically said Bob Hilliard. "I take all the risks you see, to begin with!"

"A deed to an undivided half interest in the whole Hilliard estate," stoutly said Hiram Worth.

"And, an agreement to let you purchase the other half,—at any time, within ten years, for the half of my ten thousand dollar loan, and simple interest at six per cent, with no costs. I'll have plenty of money from Jabez and Mehitabel! They are both rich."

"I'll do it," cried the excited prodigal, his brain whirling.

"I can borrow the money at the bank on the property and take up the other half at once." said Hilliard, who was no fool in finance.

"Just as soon as that fellow is dead," coldly said Hiram. "I'm not anxious to turn you out in the road. We are two of a kind! You can trust me, for, a word from *you* to Roletta Armstrong—would send me to State's Prison. A word from *me*, or a confession by you, would send us both to the gallows. It's a fight for our lives and fortunes."

"Leave it to me! I will come to you, here, when it's done!" said Hilliard, after a pause.

"Yes," said the whaler, "I wish to be able to crush Roletta with the best alibi in the world, this worthy Doctor's note book, and the evidence of the whole hotel. This is a reputable house."

Pressing a thousand dollars in bills into Bob's hands,—the desperate traitor said, "Wake up Ramon, now, and get out!—They will reconnoitre at once! You can catch them! You know every square rod of both the Coffin and Hilliard places. They'll get to work at once! I'd rather Jabez was away, when,—when it comes off," was Worth's parting greeting as he handed Bob a bottle of the best brandy,—to stiffen his courage.

Ten minutes later, he was alone! And in his uneasy

vigils of the night he saw but one danger now before him.

Bluff Hugh Allerton, hastening on by the P. & O. steamers to swear out the warrants, which would consign him to the felon's dock! "How I shall reach him, I don't know," mused Worth, "but,—Roletta can not stop him! She dares not come out and acknowledge her scheme to ruin me! I'll stay here, by Heavens, and brave her! But, every Liverpool steamer must be watched." Worth decided to act alone, in the intended assassination of Hugh Allerton.

The whole land was filled with discharged soldiers, bounty jumpers, guerillas in hiding, and all the hideous human aftermath of a great war!

"If I only catch on to him," mused Worth, "he will not come to Philadelphia. I will have the first news from Liverpool by our own people, and, they will watch the arriving lists of the P. & O. passengers! I'll beat her game!

"Telegraphed from Suez, I will know of his coming and so, be enabled to watch every Liverpool arrival. He must never live to meet Roletta Coffin! It's clear that Manson will put him in hiding, but, his office, home and the steamers can be watched.—Jabez must help me in that. I can trust him, at the last!"

Sedulously keeping up his feigned illness, not altogether artificial, "William Walsh" submitted for a period of two days,—to the chafing regime of keeping his couch. He panted for news from Hilliard.

He never knew of the sagacity with which Bob Hilliard posted the young Cuban lad so as to command all the approaches from the Coffin mansion.

It was on the first night after Bob Hilliard's return when Tom Dunstan cautiously led José up through the meadow path and standing on a hill, pointed out to the wily Portuguese the different approaches to the Hilliard house.

Both Manson and the vengeful woman, ignorant of the "segar smuggling," had concluded that Hiram Worth was in hiding near the Hilliard place of nightly

revelry, and that he, there, met Jabez and such friends as were in his own secret.

The long absence of the traitor convinced them that he was lurking near the haunt of his friends, and that he stole in and out at night, for, Dunstan had spied long and well upon the comers and goers by day. He could not watch, day and night, and so he used the artful Josè.

On the second night, after the return of the now desperate prodigal,—Bob Hilliard, with a heavy club well loaded with lead, a stout hunting knife and a loaded heavy Army revolver, crouched behind the hedge which covered the narrow lane leading into the meadow below the Hilliard house, from the Coffin estate.

"Tom, of course, would show him the way, and, then, leave the smart Dago to do his own prowling," mused Bob Hilliard, who had waited at midnight, in the deserted home of his fathers, till the Cuban lad stole in to tell him of the slow approach of the cautious Josè.

"It's for the old place," mused Bob. "It will all come back, at once, to me, by this business! *I'll do it!*"

And then, he glided down through the trees to cut off the approaching spy. He never noticed "Pribiloff" stealing along at his heels, as he skirted behind the trees, dropping down to catch his enemy's form, in the half darkness of the star lit night.

Suddenly, he heard a cautious step, as the lithe form of the Portuguese passed him, gliding on, in the silence of the night.—There was the silhouette of the island hat, the jaunty jacket, the floating red sash, and the flowing locks.

Stealing on ahead to where a little brook intersected the path, with a beating heart, Hilliard waited behind the hazel bushes, till his prey was within easy reach.

Then, with a leap of a panther, he drove the heavy knife full into the poor spy's back, as the waylaid man fell with a suppressed groan!

But, in the agony of his desperation, Josè struggling to his knees, tried to rise, as Hilliard rained merciless blows upon his enemy's head with the loaded club.

A spring, then a low growl, and—a gurgling cry,

as "Pribiloff" fixed his terrible fangs in the throat of the wretched Portuguese.

Another moment, and the frenzied prodigal was kneeling on the breast of the prostrate man and, then, with one wild slash of the knife, which his hand had clutched in his breast pocket, he silenced that gurgling cry forever!

Quickly catching up his loaded stick, Hilliard ran madly down the lane, as if pursued by all the furies.

After him, the Siberian hound glided, its jowls still wet with the warm blood of the murdered man!

It was on the boundary of the two estates, that a burly man suddenly sprang out from a coppice, crying "Stop, José! José! You coward!"

And then, smitten with a horrible fear of detection, Bob Hilliard tore himself loose from the stranger's grasp.

He whirled the loaded club madly and brought it down on Tom Dunstan's head! He knew not who had grappled with him.

Again, and again, he struck, madly, at the prostrate man, until the motionless form told him that the assailant was dead or insensible!

Then, throwing away the shivered club, which had broken in two, the prodigal raced along the road, casting heavy stones at "Pribiloff," who with a low howl, fled back to the Hilliard mansion!—How long the murderer raced on that road,—Hilliard never knew, but, while hiding exhausted by the road side, the rattle of a milk wagon, bound for Greenlawn, at last, aroused him.

The heavy March storms had washed the loose snow from the muddy road. He soon bargained for a ride, with the clownish boy, a stranger to him.

Two hours later, Bob Hilliard slipped off the Long Island City train at the Jamaica Junction, and then, made his way quickly to Brooklyn.

Sheltered in a low river side saloon until morning, he entered a sloop shop and bought a suit of warm sailor garb,—a blanket overcoat, and a cap, with ear flaps.—He looked the ordinary fresh water sailor,—now.

As the ferry boat plowed over to Hoboken, three hours later, Hilliard clumsily dropped his cheap valise with his other clothes in, overboard, to the amusement of the passengers, who saw the "half tipsy sailor" murmuring loudly for his dunnage, floating seaward.

But, once lost in the crowd at the Hoboken wharf,—the wily man became an alert hunted thing!

Stealing into Hiram Worth's hotel, at noon,—he burst into the invalid's room.

One glance told the whole story!

"Take a pull of brandy and go to sleep," growled Hiram Worth. "Say nothing. I'll attend to all the rest!"

It was evening when Bob Hilliard awoke and saw his tempter glaring at him, with a new born air of proprietorship.

"Two of a kind, now, Bob," he said grimly, giving him his hand.

"I'll execute that deed, and contract at once!—I see that you've done the trick!"

There was an evening paper lying opened on the table!

Hilliard saw the "scare" head lines. "Daring attempt to rob a Long Island mansion! Servant murdered, and, head watchman,—beaten into insensibility! The thieves foiled, by the devoted attendants!"

José and Tom Dunstan had been both silenced in different ways.

For four days, Hilliard, now sodden in drink, kept to the rooms which his "invalid friend" had secured for him, as Hiram Worth was at last "able to be around," but, had not left the hotel.

It was Worth who had inscribed his friend's name boldly on the register, using the leaf of *the day before Hilliard's arrival*, turned over so as to deceive the careless clerk.

The Doctor and housekeeper were the witnesses to a deed of a half interest in the old estate which Hiram Worth promptly executed, as per his agreement, and also a contract for a deed to give to the prodigal the full benefit of his infamous bargain.

"You, my boy," cheerfully said the delighted Worth, "will remain right here, in charge of both my room, and your own. I'll see the Doctor now and get 'permission to travel.' Jabez will soon come here to you! Don't you speak to a soul, till I'm back at your side!"—Hilliard marvelled at his iron nerve.

"What will you do?" asked the amazed murderer.

"I'm going over to the Hilliard house. I'll be *arrested*, of course, in an hour, after my arrival," boldly said Worth.

"I'll have Jabez bring all these people here, to prove that I have not left this house a moment, for a week, before, or four days after the crime! I'll fool that pack of wolves!

"And, the register will show that you were with me, the day before the happening!" craftily answered Hiram.

"Jabez brought Ramon, the Cuban lad, over here with him, and the boy is on his way to Havana, now, with a package of letters for our agents. A hundred dollars is in his pockets. I told them to keep him down there!" And, Worth grinned!

"You have the nerve of the devil!" admiringly cried Bob Hilliard, "but, you kept your word, and I, mine!"

"How about the other fellow?" asked Hilliard, at length.

"I'll attend to him!" grimly said Worth. "He can't turn up for a month. Now, I'll be back here a free man in a week!—Your game is to say that you came over to help me in my sickness,—that's all. I was sick, and you simply came over to look out for me! Found me very ill, and staid with me!"

"Jabez does not, as yet, even suspect anything! He knows nothing of José. And, the whole village is of course crazy over the affair! You'll find that this fool of a woman will now come out of her hiding and pounce down upon me! I'll make her simply ridiculous!"

Sedate and composed, six hours later, Hiram Worth drove in a leisurely way, through the streets of Hunt-

ington, and he failed not to notice the family carriage of the Coffins, standing before the Bank.

Five hours later, four men, in plain clothes, surrounded the Hilliard mansion, while two men, dashing suddenly into the old house, violently seized the ex-whaler as he sat comfortably smoking before the blazing fire. They were astounded!

"What's up?" calmly said Hiram Worth, submitting without a murmur.

"Here's a warrant for your arrest for the murder of José Oliviera, or 'Portuguese Joe,'" said the sheriff, a man unfamiliar with the haggard sailor. He was a new official.

"And another, for the assault to murder Tom Dunstan," said a second officer. "He is ruined for life,—a mere wreck."

"Sworn out, *by whom?*" coolly said the bearded sailor, as he gathered up a few cigars from an open box.

"By Miss Roletta Armstrong Coffin, of Huntington," gruffly said the Sheriff, amazed at the stoical calmness of William Walsh.

"Thanks for small favors, and, big ones, in proportion," gaily cried Worth. "A bigger set of jackasses never came on a fool's errand!"

His sangfroid disconcerted the bucolic capturing party.

"I'd like to have a chance to see a lawyer and have my old friend Jabez Simpson sent for, to take charge of this valuable property," at length, said Hiram Worth. "I do not want it pillaged!—Mr. Hilliard is away, and, the title is in him, and Captain Simpson, with his sister in law, Mrs. Wardour.—Do you want to arrest old Maggie, the cook, too?" he sneered. "Perhaps, she has murdered a few men, also!"

A crowd of five hundred excited villagers surrounded the office of the committing magistrate at Huntington, that evening, as the stony face of Squire Avery was seen next to the handcuffed man, whose full beard and slouch hat hid his face.

The wildest rumors ran riot. Every tongue wagged wildly.

On the other side of the table, silent as if carved in stone, sat Roletta Coffin, her mother and aunt at her side, with Counsellor Arthur Manson and his clerks.

"Before this man is fully committed," quietly said Squire Avery, "before the examination is held,—as we propose to sue for damages, I desire to state, frankly, that, for a week before, and, five days after these occurrences, my client was in his room, continuously, at Fuhrback's Hotel in Hoboken, under the attendance of Doctor Purvis, of Hoboken, whose note book will show four personal visits a day." There was a loud murmur, as Avery continued:

"And, the evidence of every official, servant and many boarders of that perfectly respectable house, will confirm the well known Doctor Purvis!"—The crowd gazed blankly at each other.

"There has been a brutal mistake, here, the result of some low animosity and, nothing less than a complete vindication will satisfy my client! So, beware what you do in haste!"

"A special car now awaits the party of witnesses, at Long Island City. We defy even the malignity of the person who swore out this warrant, to attack Dr. Purvis and Mr. Fuhrback.

"The former is the head of his profession in Hoboken,—and he is the consulting physician of three of the great steamer lines,—a man universally beloved.

"As for Mr. Fuhrback, he will be the next Mayor of Hoboken!

"His wife, his daughters, and the whole staff of the hotel can be produced. He has an unblemished record of fifty years!"

"What have you to say to this, Mr. Manson?" asked the village magistrate, with the air of one who had received a knock down blow. The rural Solon was sorely staggered!

There was a bobbing of three feminine heads, a bustle, a consultation of the clerks, and then, Squire Avery laughed his harsh metallic cackle.

"Oh! I see! It is not Brother Manson who is pursuing my client! Just as I thought! *The three ladies!*"

"I am not prepared to go into this matter farther, to-night," slowly said Manson, as the women's faces blanched under hostile glances.

"If Squire Avery has such controvertible evidence, —Your Honor can but judge, on the arrival of the party! Such men are naturally worthy of every credence! Doctor Purvis is known to me, *personally!* Mr. Fuhrback is a prominent man!" slowly said Manson.

"Then, I direct the prisoner to be kept in the village lock up, under guard, until to-morrow," finally remarked the Solon.

"On the arrival of the party, I will go into the matter of the alibi," said the puzzled magistrate. "If it is so clearly established, it will be my duty to instantly discharge this person arrested."

"He is here, under an assumed name," cried Arthur Manson, with an ugly sneer, following up Roletta's prompting.

"He has a better right to the name *he* uses, than the woman who swore out this warrant, has to *hers!*" coldly said Squire Avery, throwing down "William Walsh's" master's papers as a qualified officer of the English merchant marine. "Read those!"

"He has legally, changed his name, for reasons which we withhold, while the lady voluntarily changed hers to accept a large inheritance from her benefactor, Zenas Coffin," concluded Avery.

The eyes of the two mortal enemies met, and Hiram Worth flashed one glance of unutterable hatred at the excited heiress, who now trembled with impotent rage.

To have deserted her hiding place, to have failed in her attack upon Hiram Worth, was a blow which smote her to the heart!

As the party rose to file out, Squire Avery calmly said, "You see, you've got the wrong pig by the ear! We now offer two responsible sureties, in land and U. S. bonds, for one hundred thousand dollars, for this

innocent man. We have them here,—ready, *now*, to qualify!”—This was a crushing blow.

“What have you to support your statements, Squire Avery, as to the evidence of these forthcoming witnesses?” asked the magistrate.

“Here is the telegraph operator, with a repeated sworn certificate,” decisively said Avery.

Sworn at once, the operator read as follows :

“William Walsh has been in the Hotel Fuhrback, continuously, for over two and a half weeks, until early this morning. The arrest is either a clumsy mistake, or, a brutal outrage.”

The signatures, “Robert Purvis, M.D.,” and “Adolph Fuhrback,” were duly appended.

“You can take this man Walsh away in your custody, under a parole to you, to-night, Squire,” said the magistrate, at last.

“No sir! I’ll go to jail,” huskily whispered Hiram Worth, who was as yet unrecognized by the crowd of excited villagers.

Before the next night, a search of the Hilliard mansion, and the triumphantly delivered evidence of twenty unshaken witnesses,—resulted in the instant discharge of “William Walsh,” at which final examination, Arthur Manson sat with an averted face.

The three women who had exulted in his capture were all absent!

Only Jabez Simpson knew where Hiram Worth disappeared to, the next day, after he had been escorted back to the Hotel Fuhrback, in open triumph, by the Hoboken delegation.

There was now another sensation to add to the growing mystery of the murder of the poor Portuguese, and the attack upon the faithful watchman. That Tom Dunstan was doomed to be an idiot for life, was a fate worse than death, to the rugged sailor, and the sad news spread far and wide.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE SMUGGLER STRIKES BACK.

The disappearance of Dolores, the beautiful woman who had arrived with José at the Coffin mansion, was followed by the return of Bill Tarbox and his sister, to the little house in Whalers' Row, on the east side of the Cold Spring Harbor.

It seemed but natural that the mysterious mariner, "William Walsh," should shake the dust of Huntington off his feet, and, Arthur Manson, puzzled and defeated, soon lost all trace of the truculent stranger. Roletta Coffin writhed in the agony of her defeat.

The head law clerk who followed Jabez and Walsh over to Fuhrback's hotel, only learned that the party had, at once, packed up the sick man's luggage and were driven to the Pennsylvania Railway station. Manson was both sullen and silent.

Calmly unconcerned, Bob Hilliard sauntered back to Huntington and, soon, sat with Jabez Simpson, over the wine, in the old mansion, a stout American farmer and his wife having been engaged to attend to the household, while a gigantic negro, a stranger, acted as outdoor man, with the assistance of the fierce-eyed "Pribiloff" as a guardian. The gossips were utterly at sea.

The country papers soon came to the conclusion that passing footpads had attacked the unfortunate Portuguese and, that Tom Dunstan, running to his rescue, had been beaten into insensibility, robbed and then left for dead.—A plausible theory!

The whole island had been lately disturbed with a series of plunderings and robberies, and the "war" demoralization was an easy explanation of these violent attacks.

But, as a fortnight glided on,—the news of Bill Tarbox's slow yielding to the lifelong struggle with "John Barleycorn," was brought to Hiram Worth in his secluded boarding house in Philadelphia.

That Miss Coffin was sullenly awaiting the opening of the Spring, at her mansion, was a new source of menacing danger to the exonerated scoundrel.

Worth saw in the veiled reference to his assumed name, the shadow of Hugh Allerton. Here was her last trump card.

"If that man ever lands, I am lost, unless I skip to Havana," mused the wretched Ishmaelite, gazing fondly at Dolores, to whom Jabez Simpson had conveyed the message of her long mourned lover of Funchal. Dolores had flown to her lover's side, at once!

His early voyages had given Jabez the command of the Spanish and Portuguese tongues, and a mere hint that she would find her lost lover at Philadelphia, caused the woman to flit away, in the confusion of the examination at Huntington.

The poor girl had been brought in, only to testify to the identity of the man slain. She was terrified by the whole hubbub.

Conducted by a messenger to Fuhrback's Hotel, she there awaited Jabez, who took her to Philadelphia, where Hiram Worth, now defiant, had boldly cast off his disguise, and with trim garb, and, now, a neatly shaven face, as well as fashionably cropped locks, awaited the poor waif of Funchal, in prosperous guise.

The "calentura" was a good explanation of his aged appearance, and, free with his money, Hiram laughed over his wine at the artless girl's simple story. All seemed fairly bright now!

"Dunstan is laid out," he mused. "Tarbox is going off the hooks, and, Bob Hilliard certainly finished Senhor José Oliviera, in good shape.

"By Jove! If Allerton were to appear, there would be but one man's unconfirmed story of Jasper's killing! I could never be convicted on the evidence of an unpunished pirate like him.

"And even that, the log of the *Shenandoah* would belie."

It was easy to follow out the artifices of the sleepless avenger of the man who died in the Ochotsk.

For Roletta Coffin now abandoned the cool counsels of Arthur Manson.

As day after day, drifted by, Hiram Worth grew haggard, under Jabez's carefully sent messages, that Roletta Coffin still lingered at the old mansion, and that Bill Tarbox was now past all surgery.

Manson's clerks still watched each incoming Liverpool steamer, so, the friendly network of spies directed alone by Hilliard,—certified, but the missing man came not! And,—both sides wondered!

It was early in April, that Dolores brought to her moody lover, a letter bearing the Liverpool postmark.

She gazed wistfully at her only protector as the moody man tore it open.

Suddenly, he gave a shout of joy and clasping her in his arms, cried, "We will have a fiesta to-night! One that you will never forget! You shall have a new dress.

"We will go to the theater and then have a supper like the 'Posada Braganza's' best."

Dolores uttered a cry of delight!

The letter fluttered to the floor and was soon forgotten as Hiram Worth read, in glee, the cutting of a late Bombay newspaper.

The details of a terrific hurricane were fully given, including the loss of the steamer *Cygnét* and all her crew!

The heroism of "Second Officer Hugh Allerton," drowned with a whole boat's crew,—while trying to cut the cable shackles of the *Cygnét*, was extolled. His name was that of a laurelled dead hero!

Hiram Worth laughed, insanely, as he read the encomiums, and the further statement, that "Mate Allerton,—formerly, a "Gunner in the Royal Navy,"—had been buried by the Company's agents, with military honors and, that a local monument would be erected to commemorate his bravery, in trying to loosen the ship to run out to sea!

Crowds had watched his heroic efforts to release the ship, so that she could make an offing,—but, whirling

on her chains, she was dashed on shore, after turning turtle!

"Now, by the God who made me, my time of revenge has come,"—cried the hunted traitor who felt that a crushing weight had been lifted from his heart.

"Safe, safe!" he cried as he poured out the champagne for the simple Island siren, who "joyed of his joys," now, as she had vaguely "sorrowed of his sorrows." It was a night of unforgotten triumph!

Mystified by the long trip over the vast waste of waters,—Dolores had shed but few tears over José's still unexplained death. That the man who had lived by craft, treachery, and violence, should die by the knife, seemed to her but natural.

The lurid memories of Portuguese Ann's resort told her of many a stout fellow, his belt laden with the coveted treasures, who had never reached his ship!—Done away with like dogs by José and his gang.

The way of the sailor in this weary world, is paved with the bones of "Jack" betrayed on shore, and his watery path leads him over an ocean, whose sands are strewn with skeletons,—the grim harvest of the sea!

But that some treachery to her liberal lover, now daily growing into his old favor, had been wrought by the handsome Lady of Huntington was patent to the simple Dolores,

"She will be punished now!" she whispered, as the siren sped away for the outing which was to be the funeral feast of the stout hearted Hugh Allerton.

"Punished! Yes! I swear it!" cried Worth, "but, how?"

His quick mind told him that, in a fortnight, Miss Roletta Coffin and Counsellor Manson would know of the untimely death of Allerton in that terrific Bombay hurricane.

"It saved me the trouble of waylaying him," gaily cried Hiram, as he drank "To the 'Simoon,'" the wild hearted breath of the desert, sweeping on in the re-

sistless hurricane, to spend its force along the Chinese coasts, in the dreaded "Tai-Fun."

"I can face her, to-day, without fear! I can confide in Bob Hilliard! We are two of a kind! She will soon sneak away to Italy! Should I trust, to the future, for my revenge? Manson will shield her, of course, with all his legal cunning."

He ran over the list of his dangerous enemies. All gone! Not an eye witness of the tragedy remained! It seemed as if the Devil fought for him!

And the luckless adventurers of the *Shenandoah* were all scattered to the four corners of the earth, all unworthy of credence.

"There was Manning, the 'champion liar,' and all the Yankee deserters from the burned ships also on board," mused Worth. "But, they know nothing positive!" he mused.

"The Captain of the *Shenandoah* will shield England, his own friends, and try to defend the ship, so his log will not convict me.

"Paul Braxton did not enlist me! I received the English notes from Hugh Allerton!

"And, I can simply say now that I bided my time, to escape from the pirate! I can challenge the whole ship's crew to deny that I was never allowed to go on shore, or, to write a letter, and, that I was watched night and day! As for my transactions with Captain Waddell, my word is as good as his! He will not care to talk—for reasons of his own! He will aid no Yankee courts.

"Old Starbuck will stand by me with Jabez against this common enemy! But I will make this woman leave her Suffolk realm now in shame and disgrace! I must find the best way to strike at her!"

To telegraph to Bob Hilliard, guardedly, was his first measure of revenge. "There must be some way to safely reach her," he growled.

This done, the hardened adventurer went out upon an orgy which opened the eyes of Dolores.

Covered with hastily caught up finery, the beautiful Portuguese watched the mock splendors of the play

that night, and over the wine and supper, gazed with wonder at this prince of all seamen,—the recreated Monte Cristo of her dreams!

Two days later, while Dolores dallied with her new finery, the two partners in crime sat long in converse, over the best that the sailor's paradise could afford.

A new and daring scheme had been broached by the acute Hilliard, one which made Hiram Worth chuckle with the anticipation of a revenge.

"We need the use of our own Suffolk shores to run our Havana business," slowly said Hilliard, now the picture of returning prosperity. He was again, "the Squire."

"Let us hit Roletta hard! Shame for shame, disgrace for disgrace! I've picked up a great deal of gossip—Jabez can tell me the rest, and what is lacking, we will invent!" said the crafty Bob.

"Let me use a thousand dollars and this woman will soon sneak away like a thief in the night! What is money to you? We are making it, easily, in our cigar smuggling!" was Bob's sage remark.

He concluded "It's your only revenge! Avery tells me, as the authorities arrested you, you can not receive damages from Roletta! Shall I act?"

An hour later, the undetected murderer of José Oliviera left Philadelphia in the highest spirits.

"You are to appear in your old guise, clad like the 'one who is the bearer of good tidings'—and come boldly to my home, (your home), as my guest!

"Ignore the whole countryside and we will all stand by you!—Dolores can come over later! And, glide easily into her new station!

"I'll send Jabez to bring her, demurely clad, to the old home. So, the gossips will be baffled!—In all this flurry, we can do as we please, for Mr. Arthur Manson will be fully contented with his legal pickings from Roletta.—The longer her absence, the more he will steal!"

Two weeks later, the angered woman who had failed of her revenge, sat in her splendid library at the Coffin

House, listening to the disclosure of her lawyer which had left her pale, helpless and trembling.

A dispatch from New York City had prepared her for some most serious tidings.

But, this new blow came upon her with crushing force! It left her helpless!

There, before her, lay the letters of the London agency, the Liverpool Bank, and Manson's legal correspondents in the City on the Mersey.

"The death of 'Second Officer Hugh Allerton' of the *Cygnét* is fully confirmed by our letters from Bombay," wrote the agency. "His private papers are all being returned to us.

"Naturally, the funds from the unpaid draft, less the expenses, will all revert to you.

"We enclose all the correspondence and are pained to be obliged to confirm the newspaper accounts of the loss of the *Cygnét*. It was a terrific hurricane.

"Reuter's agency has wired to us from Alexandria, 'Accounts are reliable, in every particular.' We send you herewith the Bombay Herald."

The light seemed all to fade away from the April sunshine, as the heiress gazed at her grave faced lawyer.

"It's all over. I am powerless, now!" she said, as Manson questioned her as to the possibility of any future discoveries as to Worth's guilt.

"Allerton's written statements are of no value as evidence," reluctantly said Manson. "You say that you recognize the supposed murderer of Jasper Coffin in this man 'William Walsh?' You must, now, be careful, or, he may hold you liable! Can you think of no one to use as a direct proof? Mere suspicion will be of no use."

"No one," sadly said the defeated Roletta. "José Oliviera lies in the village churchyard. Tabitha came to me, yesterday, to beg money for Bill Tarbox's funeral. She is an old gossip,—legally incredible, and, in her dotage. Poor Dunstan, who merely saw this renegade on the *Shenandoah* is in the Home for the

Incurables. No! Worth has conquered. The devil fights for his own!"

"You may be mistaken in all this," coldly said the lawyer, "as you were about the killing of José. You seem to have a blind hatred of this man.

"Now, Purvis called on me yesterday. He and Fuhrback want a certificate of entire exoneration of the Hotel Fuhrback, which they say harbors no murderers!—That was a crushing alibi, of a dozen reputable witnesses, with twenty-four more to call on. This man 'Walsh' bears a good repute over there, and he has a legal right to change his name,—you know that!"

"I am done," slowly said the vanquished Roletta.

"Then, you must leave here, at once," said Manson.

"The French steamer sails Saturday, and I have reserved tickets for you, my sister and your maid. Let nothing delay you! I will attend to the whole household here. I would send your mother, and her sister, out west, say, for a year."

"Why?" cried the heiress, with a sinking heart, as she saw the trouble in the grave lawyer's agitated face.

"This is why, my poor friend," slowly said Manson, laying down a newspaper before her.

It was the boldest of all the New York newspapers!

"They fear neither God, man nor devil! You must get away to Rome, under the social protection of our powerful friends or, else your social future is blasted forever. These other people seem to have both friends, money and backing! I cannot legally protect you! This article is a marvel of craft and skill. It leads the reader along! I would not face this storm. I would close this house, indefinitely.

"For if you remain here, you will be soon overrun with journalistic adventurers. You cannot stand it!"

Through blinding tears, Roletta Coffin read the head lines, "The Skeleton in the Household!—A Long Island Millionaire's Late Amends."—"From Poverty to Millions."—"An Heiress with Two Fathers."—"High Life in Huntington Unveiled."

"My God," she groaned, "This is horrible, horrible!"

"You see, you would go ahead and drive this desperate man to bay," kindly said Manson. "They are all striking back at you now! I saw a bundle of a hundred of these papers tossed off at the station. The train also was all full of these journals. There is but one thing left for you to do. Mr. Coffin as a banker, a money lender, a corporation officer, was most widely unpopular. Leave here, and leave at once! Let me arrange all. I will see your mother and aunt.

"You must go over to New York City with me, to-night! I'll send my nephew here to aid the two ladies to pack all the household valuables. I'll put two reputable caretakers in here. I'll come over once a week! All your wardrobe and personal effects can be sent on to-morrow."

Silent, sick at heart, Roletta Coffin read the published story of Coffin's intrigues, to rob the whaling crews, and of his scheme to control the fleet through his son, and swindle his associates.

The story of Jasper's craft, his attempts to take away the *Reindeer* from Starbuck, of the old banker's manipulations of the men's accounts, the conspiracy to control all the company's assets, was boldly told.

And as to his private life,—the lifelong pursuit of Mary Worth,—the desire to rob her of her mortgaged farm,—the insinuations as to Roletta's shameful parentage,—every disgraceful rumor was crystallized, in daring insults.

The full page screed closed with the blatant promise of a second chapter, "in the near future," as journalists say.

"That the natural daughter tossed up on the top wave of success, follows her supposed 'adoptive father,' in his usury and money grabbing, is but too well known to all Suffolk County," was the climax!

"The story of the hidden inner life of this audacious social pretender,—a narrative, beggaring the wildest fiction, will be given to our readers, later, as appropriately,—there is more than one skeleton in the great

mansion, where this hard hearted woman rules iron hearted, over the humble circles, from which she emerged, by arts unnamable, to occupy a position, which should be made the pillory of shame!"

It was a terrible arraignment, though her name was withheld.

That evening, a veiled and bowed form, was seen at the side of Arthur Manson, as the carriage of the Coffins dashed along to Greenlawn, where a private car soon hid the woes of the heart-wrecked millionairess.

There was a little dinner later at the St. Nicholas Hotel in New York City, in a private room, where Bob Hilliard laughed over the wine, with Ben Haggerty, of the "New York Flambeau," and the triumphant Hiram Worth.

The renegade traitor was now clad in purple and fine linen.—Jewels shone on his breast and he was bold in the complete unveiling of his olden identity. He had decided to take on in America the name of Hiram Worth once more.

Dolores only eyed her excited lover askance, as the wine cup was emptied, and Worth cried, "Haggerty, you are to be a standing guest, always, at our Liberty Hall!—Your article was a stunner! It has driven the upstart to the 'Brevoort,' in flight, and they will all clear out for Havre, on Saturday."

"They have thrown up the sponge. Retreat is confession," said Hilliard.

"Then you'll not want the other article?"—sadly remarked the greedy reporter.

"On the contrary," fiercely said the last traitor of Long Island. "More than ever, now! When they sail, come over to Liberty Hall! I'll give you then the facts for Chapter Number Two.

"I wish it written in the highest style of your art, and translated into both French and Italian. When that is done, your money is ready!"

The journalistic free lance studied the face of the speaker, convulsed with the pent up hatred of a life.

"I would not like *you* for an enemy," he said, as

he filled his glass, and then drank to, "our next happy meeting."

"I fight my battles through," sternly said "Mr. Walsh." "*I ask no quarter, and, I give none!*"

On the very next day, the semblance of his old self, Hiram Worth pushed his way through an excited crowd at the Huntington station.

The "Flambeau" was eagerly displayed in every shop window, and even the loungers in the taverns, knew that the "Coffin and Armstrong people had cleared out, for parts unknown."

A couple of stout guards under Manson's nephew summarily drove away all the curious from the gates of the Coffin mansion.

But, grim and silent, dashing past all old friends, without a word, Hiram Worth laughed merrily as Bob Hilliard drove him along the avenue to the house, where, a week later, Dolores openly appeared to queen it as the wonder and mystery of the little settlement.

Speeding down the wooded glen, Bob nudged his friend when they passed the spot where Dunstan fell.

"Tom fell there," he whispered hoarsely, and five hundred yards further on he nodded, "José went out of business, here!"

As they drew up before the house, "Pribiloff" leaped frantically upon his returning master.

"One faithful friend," growled Hiram Worth! Only one!"

And, though all men soon knew of the lost whaler's return,—no one dared to cross the threshold of "Liberty Hall."

Only Jabez Simpson and the sly members of the now active "Cigar Distributing Society." Hiram Worth was safe, at last!

And, the forehanded Long Islanders easily understood Hiram Worth's legal change of name abroad to "William Walsh," in order to get an officer's billet on a British steamer,—at a time, when "No Yankee need apply."

As for the rest of his adventures, the public were left to guess, all men knowing that he had honestly inherited considerable property!

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE COUNTESS GUASTALLA.

It was fortunate for Hiram Worth, in his open return to Cold Spring Harbor, that the dreadful scandal of Roletta Coffin's social unmasking occupied all minds.

From Oyster Bay to Huntington, the thousand tongued rumors were bandied freely, in view of the ignominious flight of the unpopular rich young woman.

Many an old surmise was now raked up from its Lethean obscurity, to revive the memories of the Don Juan youth of cruel old Zenas Coffin. That he had, as a struggling clerk, long kept company with comely Abigail Fraser, who later became Abigail Armstrong, was well remembered, as also his desperate attempt to bear off Mary Wardour, then a county heiress, from the dashing Ezra Worth!

All men knew of Captain Worth's investment of half his wife's dowry in an East Indianman which was wrecked as a total loss, under his blundering successor, and the later failure of the Marine Assurance Company which left the widow of the retired Captain dependent only upon her remaining farm for the support of herself and her son.

The flitting of Roletta's mother and her sister,—the sudden closing of the great mansion, (now the show place of the county), was a bitter blow to local trade, and was taken as a confession of the truth of the scandalous scree in the "Flambeau." The whole countryside awaited the second chapter!

No one had been able to get a word with the scattered household, the governesses and all the entourage of the young millionairess, having been quickly whisked away.

At the bank, Manson—now a director, spoke boldly of the infamy of the libels which had brought a young girl to unmerited shame.

"Why don't you sue the paper, for libel?" croaked Squire Avery, over the Directors' Board.

"I hope you will, for, as a director of the Cold Spring Whaling Company, I propose to go into matters pretty closely, when Jonas Starbuck returns!—You'll please to take notice that we all withdraw our proxies."

He handed Manson a list which left the "Coffin Estate" in a slight but fatal minority of the corporation.

"Of course, Manson, we shall go into all this in equity, and so, have an accounting, from the Coffin's management.—I never believed much in the 'one man power' anyway."

"Avery, you are a good lawyer," said Manson testily.—"You know the difficulty of proving a negative."

"We had no trouble in the case of that poor devil, whom you hauled up here for murdering your Portuguese servant!" dryly remarked Avery, with a whispered remark about "chickens coming home to roost." And, Manson sighed in silence.

The scattered schoolmates of Hiram Worth were all astounded to receive only a gruff nod, when his presence became generally known. He volunteered no confidences—and sought no friendships.

At the Postoffice, with Bob Hilliard at his side and the natty road wagon waiting without, the fashionably dressed new "Squire" merely remarked, "I've had enough of the sea! When the leases are run out, Bob and I are going to farm the old place together with my own home tract.—We will throw it all into one concern and then have as large a tract as any one in Suffolk, except the 'Coffin Estate.'"

Questioned, timidly, as to his wanderings, Hiram bluntly said, "I had a hard deal! Sailor's luck! But, I pulled out and, I have a few shots in the locker. My

mother saved a neat little fortune for me, though the old skinflint Coffin thought he could foreclose!"

"Yes, and Jabez and Mehitabel have no one else, to leave their money to," said Will Worsham—the only villager admitted to the secrets of the Hilliard house.

Jabez had selected this distant relative as the head teamster and messenger for the "produce" handled by the *Restless* and her flying mate.

Openly defiant now of the proprieties, Hiram Worth spent his time between New York City and the lonely mansion where the "prodigal son" now kept open house to his familiars.

The whole second story of the superb colonial mansion was given up to the dark eyed Dolores who was content to reign within the walls, sheltered from the prying eyes of the Yankeeified country folk.

And there, waited on by a Portuguese maid servant, picked up in New York's growing "Foreign Quarter," the simple-hearted waif of Fortune dwelt in an easy luxury. Her letters to Funchal, dictated by Hiram Worth, described her perfect well being and were accompanied with rich presents, which lulled any local suspicion of intent in the killing of the reckless José. The inhabitants of Madeira were all imbued with the easy fatalism of the Latin races.

Life, offering no definite rewards to them, was quitted, without regret, by those who, with no happy past to regret,—feared no future; merely enduring the common lot as the ox dumbly bows his head to the pole axe!

But, while the poor islanders drank only the dregs of life, the cup of bitterness was drained by Roletta Coffin, in her circuitous flight to the Eternal City.

Hiram Worth was now keenly on the alert! He had made a friend for life in the reckless Ben Haggerty, the most audacious literary free lance of the "New York Flambeau."

Possessed of all reportorial privileges, ubiquitous and keen sighted, Haggerty easily divined the purposes of the adroit Arthur Manson. The clearing out of the whole family of the absent heiress, the social

isolation, left the whole management of the "Coffin Estates" and the vast property, to the needy lawyer.

While Haggerty gladly pocketed the thousand dollars for the "Second Chapter" of the romantic secret history of the brilliant beauty, now being cautiously introduced to the best circles of the city on the Tiber, he had received a "five hundred extra," for the French and Italian translations, now ready for Worth's future vile uses.

The victorious traitor spent his time in New York with Haggerty and his Bohemian friends, and gathered them all around him at Huntington for the fishing, shooting, sailing and country pleasures of the Suffolk woods and shores. Old Jabez Starbuck was still in the Arctic, chasing the bowheads.

The *Falcon* was now Worth's own pleasure boat, and a keen, secret watch was kept on the Long Island community through Haggerty. No one dared to challenge the wary Worth, now a powerful property owner who boldly stated that he only awaited Jason Starbuck's return "to settle up his old business," before "going abroad" for a term of years. He was feared, and, yet, no one dared to insult or openly avoid him.

Mehitabel Wardour, aged, failing and self controlled, merely scraped her life savings together to fortify the fortunes of her nephew, to whom she had promised all her hoarded wealth, if he would only settle again at the family home, and so, eventually marry in the Squirearchy of Suffolk. It looked as if the family name would be reestablished.

Haggerty soon discovered the evident desire of Counsellor Manson to smooth over the unfortunate arrest of the supposed "William Walsh," as the murderer of José.

"He intends that the heiress shall never return!" acutely reasoned Haggerty. "It is easy to see his game! He is a greedy lawyer!"

"You are wise to accept your aunt's conditions! When she passes away, it will remove all neighborly friction. Look at Manson's game! His family are now all installed at the Coffin mansion, his nephew is

the Cashier and a director of the Bank, and, another relative is just voted in as "Treasurer and Head Accountant" of the Whaling Company.

"Manson also controls the cash, stocks, bonds, lands and local influence of the absentee, and, naturally, wishes to ingratiate himself with all Suffolk!

"It's his game to be the 'easy boss,' the 'popular representative of a defunct but still hated old usurer.'

"You hate this woman! True! Let well enough alone! Manson will revenge you, day by day!" And Haggerty roared in glee.

The truth of this theory was evident in Manson's approaches to Squire Avery and his publicly expressed regret for the unwarranted arrest of the evidently innocent Hiram Worth.

"Women are queer creatures, Squire!" said Manson, over the dinner table at the great house when Zenas Coffin's choicest wine was freely circulating, one evening.

"I know all that!" calmly rejoined the crafty Long Island lawyer. "Worth is much embittered by his sad life, the experiences of which he keeps to himself! He guards no rancor against you, personally, and, only waits to get such adjustment of his lost profits, on the cruise of the *Reindeer* as Captain Starbuck's evidence will give to him. I am his legal adviser, and I know that he needs no vindication! The proofs of his entire innocence are so clear that even the bitterest enemy must declare him blameless.

"There's some old sweetheating story of boy and girlhood between him and your proud client who, certainly, has not gained any popularity by her course since she was rolled up to the zenith, by Fortune's wheel! I'll tell Worth of your friendly personal feeling, so, let the whole thing go at that!"

It seemed as if the devil had permanently taken the returned traitor under his august protection, for, Haggerty, in several trips to Washington, in the interest of his sworn protector, easily learned that the *Shenandoah's* books, papers, log and records, were held judiciously concealed by the British Government, now

sincerely anxious to arrange all needless friction with its "step-children across the sea." For wise counsels were now prevailing, and, both countries were being appeased.

As the year rolled around, the disappearance of all the forces raised to suppress the Rebellion, the sale of the surrendered Southern iron clad *Stonewall* to Japan, and the "shaking down" of the whole land tired of blood and war, caused the *Shenandoah's* doings to be relegated to the dark Limbo of history. The whole people gladly turned away from battle and murder!

But, one fatal gnawing at Worth's cowardly heart, annoyed him now. The ghost of Banquo might appear in "Hugh Allerton" should there have been any mistake in that individual's opportune demise!

For reasons of evident prudence,—Hiram Worth left the details of the cigar smuggling to the conduct of Bob Hilliard, and the still money grabbing Jabez Simpson. He well knew that he was followed by a yet unallayed curiosity and he only indulged in social pleasures when under the watchful eyes of the dumbly faithful Dolores! He trusted no outsiders.

Hilliard was now linked to him by hooks of steel, for, by the arrangement of pocketing Hilliard's profits for two years, in the "Havana connection," he had, now, deeded back to the half reformed prodigal, the remaining half of his landed patrimony.

The reserving of the occupancy of the second floor of the mansion for his life, enabled the two men to defy both curiosity and suspicion.

It was a bright thought of Hiram Worth to send Ben Haggerty out to Liverpool with a run to Rome, to satisfy himself of the actual death of Allerton and get the details of the rising social career of the rich American beauty now a star in the Eternal City.

Drinking the dregs of life at a little over thirty, the still infatuated lover recalled Roletta Coffin in all the insolence of her beauty, in all the pride of plutocratic power, as she had defied him upon the lonely road where José Oliviera had died later.

"She shot her bolt, and missed!" he growled. "But,

that woman's revenge slumbers not, nor sleeps! It is a war to the knife! She must never return to America!"

He panted for the return of Haggerty, who was admirably adapted to pick up the gossip of Rome.

Young, handsome, well educated, flush with Worth's money,—the reporter was a welcome guest in the Cafe Grèco, the American Club, and in the circle of artists, writers, students and loungers who scanned every new arrival as a possible pigeon for general plucking.

The news that Allerton's old mother had collected all his money lying in the bank of Liverpool, as well as his life assurances and his arrears of wages, came by letter, with the official statement of the voiding of Allerton's license as "Master" by death duly certified as occurring in that most fortunate of all hurricanes.

"And, now," gaily cried Worth, as he dismissed his last fear, "dove la donna? I fear Allerton's ghost, no more!"

A month later, he learned of the crafty social exploitation of the dashing American heiress, who was now the "star of the Pincian Hill."

It seemed incredible to the man who had sworn to wreck Roletta Coffin's life, that the purse of the old miser, Zenas Coffin, should open the doors of the Quirinal Palace, the Doria, Barberini, and Pamphili to the village belle, born as humble Roletta Armstrong.

The Papal temporal power was tottering! The fierce Antonelli had hardened the heart of kindly old Pius the Ninth, and the "handwriting on the wall" was seen in the Quirinal, as well as Louis Napoleon's gilded Tuileries.

Gold, bright, ready gold, brought the stately American beauty an unusual welcome, its use being skilfully aided by the official introductions of Arthur Manson's complaisant relatives.

Burning her ships behind her, the ambitious woman sealed up her past from all.

Surrounded with Cardinals, Princes, the Guardia Nobile, the Vatican diplomats, and all those whose names were in the "Libro d'oro," Roletta Coffin soon

forgot the man who had sworn to dash the cup of life away from her lips at its sweetest!

The grave magnificence of her Palazzo, the glories of the villa at Tivoli, the accomplishments and aplomb of this seeming golden maid startled the needy cavaliers of the city of Romulus.

And so, the glittering throng closed in around the self-possessed woman who was guided, as if by an unseen hand,—through the snares of the crafty, past all the pitfalls which await the “nouveaux riches.” No one suspected her wifehood, or her strange widowhood.

A cruel smile wreathed Hiram Worth's pitiless face as he read his spy's accurate report.

“There seems to be but one man making the real running,” he said.

“The Count Guido Guastalla, handsome, distinguished, even at twenty-seven, the heir to an old name, a man who is the very flower of the Roman noblesse, destined to be always in the highest ranks of official splendor, allied to the oldest houses, this young patrician is picked as the winner of the great heiress' hand. Serious, of a splendid manly beauty, he is as proud as a Circassian prince, and, a young Apollo of our day!” So wrote Haggerty.

“Decorations, titles, employment, all the honors of life await him. And so, his castles, his villas, his galleries, only need the vivifying touch of American gold to make him the ‘very rose and expectancy of the fair state!’

“Rumor has it that, after Easter, their nuptials will be soon celebrated. For, though unencumbered with family, with no social background, it is whispered that the American Minister is determined to make this international union, the one social event of his incumbency.

“Let me have instant instructions! I have arranged in your interest for a bi-weekly letter from here and so,—I wait your orders. The man whom I use here will do my utmost bidding and, you are not to be known—you cannot be traced in the whole transaction. You can act, as you will.”

When Worth had dispatched his letter of recall and a draft to Haggerty, he sat down to muse over his campaign of vengeance.

"*Before or, after?*" he repeated, in indecision, a question left unanswered a hundred times. The decision came to him at last, when he reviewed the whole bitter record of the past.

"I drink only the dregs of life! She shall live to know every heart-break, every pang that shame and disgrace can bring! Then, my revenge will be complete!"

He dared not ask himself what the future held for him. "If she goes down to ruin with me, I care not!" he cried fiercely. "I will placate old Starbuck and when all is over, travel, enjoy myself and—try to forget!"

He had grown to look upon the slaying of Jasper Coffin as a mere act of *lex talionis*. And yet, he writhed under the knowledge that the dead man had left a gallant naval officer's record of loyalty, that Coffin had robbed him of the one woman of all the world for him, and the bellowing echoes of the *Shenandoah's* guns seemed to haunt him yet.

"Traitor—yes, I am a traitor!" he growled in abject shame. "That is the one unpardonable crime, for, I went open-eyed to my disgrace!"

He dared not face the sight of the tall monument in the Huntington churchyard where Jasper Coffin's figure stood, sculptured in the knightly uniform of his country, with the sword of honor by his side and the flag draped over the broken pillar.

"He died like a man!" mused the unpunished murderer. "The victory is to him,—at the last!"

And, for this victory of the hated dead, he hated now with doubled intensity the woman who had juggled already with two lives, and who, now, in satin and pearls, was leaning to listen to the murmured tenderness of the dark eyed Count Guastalla!

"Wait, only wait," the wretch growled. "She shall pay for all!"

The New Year had passed and the silver snow

mantle again covered the broad Suffolk plains, before Ben Haggerty arrived in New York City being preceded by the regular reports of his secret ally in Rome.

The files of the "Fanfulla" and "Capitale," sent on, regularly, were now filled with details of the approaching union of the head of the great house of Guastalla with the reigning American beauty of the season. A grim smile overcast Worth's face as he read of the impending change of faith of the "ingenue bride."

The whole stately ritual of Mother Church was to be invoked. Castellani's jewelers were busy resetting the famous Guastalla diamonds, and Worth's rarest talents were now involved in the creation of the trousseau and the queenly wedding robes. A bridal veil of Point d'Alençon with the coat of arms of the Guastallas and the interlaced monograms of bride and groom was already busying scores of nimble fingers.

The American Minister was to officially represent the dead millionaire father, and, already the projected fêtes and high life functions of the wedding only awaited the happy time of Easter.

The long black days of Lent drifted slowly away.

Ben Haggerty wondered at the silent preoccupation of Hiram Worth, who walked the old halls of the Hilliard mansion in a close self-communion.

Even Bob Hilliard stopped in his reckless career, to marvel at the morose demeanor of the man whose marvellous ability had guided the Havana conspirators so far, without an alarm, past all the dangers of their daring nefarious schemes.

It was while awaiting the news of the marriage that the tide of Hiram Worth's strange fortunes rose again!

Peacefully passing away, seated in her chair, before the lonely fireplace,—Mehitabel Wardour left to her only succeeding relative, the splendid farm and the snug accumulations of long years of unflinching thrift!

A great country gathering which marked the universal respect for the last person destined to bear the name of "Wardour."

Hiram Worth, clad in black, bowed gravely to the neighbors, who for three years had regarded him as



wrapped in an impenetrable mystery. The gossips soon learned of the intention of the now substantially rich man to be absent abroad for an indefinite period.

It was a long year yet, till the new *Reindeer* was expected home, in fact, the insiders already knew of the possibility of San Francisco displacing unlucky New Bedford as the Queen City of the whalers.

Honolulu and the Occidental city were eager to seize the profitable trade, in view of the approaching completion of the first Pacific railway. The cruise had been very successful.

That Starbuck would return for instructions, was however certain.

To the watchful Squire Avery, Worth simply said: "I will execute a full power of attorney to Jabez Simpson, and, another to you, to take effect, in case of his demise."

Having taken possession of the hoarded accumulations of his benefactress, Worth absented himself for a few days from Huntington, his departure being followed by that of Dolores, who also silently disappeared.

Only Jabez Simpson and Bob Hilliard knew aught of the real intentions of the gloomy young man in whose guilty hands all seemed to turn to gold.

But, Squire Avery had the Liverpool address for the moody traveller's mail, and, only Ben Haggerty saw Hiram Worth wave his handkerchief in adieu when the Cunard steamer *Persia* left her docks on the Saturday following the receipt of the news of the glories of the coming Guastalla nuptials.

That the now happy Dolores was half way across the sea to Funchal, before her moody lover sailed for Liverpool, was the secret of the newspaper man alone.

And, no one regretted the departure of the unpunished traitor save the strange bloodhound "Pribiloff," whose low mournful howl at night was heard around the Hilliard mansion where Bob now kept high revels.

Old Jabez Simpson, in possession of the two family farms, as Worth's agent, was now able to fully control the movements of the smugglers without trusting to the self-control of Hilliard who, while sharing every

danger, only loved money for the pleasures which it purchased. Still, he had learned one bitter lesson.

But, after his hard apprenticeship to beggary, the reestablished prodigal held to his oath never again to let his family lands go under the control of the money shark!

Counting the weary days in New York City, Ben Haggerty awaited a despatch to be forwarded by the fastest steamer from Liverpool, one which was to make good to him a certain draft, deposited with a sealed letter of instructions for Jabez Simpson.

It was a month after the unmarked disappearance of Hiram Worth, when the New York "Flambeau" published a two column article of all the details of the superb wedding at Rome, where a princely ring had surrounded Abigail Armstrong's heartlessly ambitious daughter! The marriage had been almost regal, in its splendor.

The list of Ambassadors, dignitaries, women of rank and nobles, read like a summary of the Almanach de Gotha!

Following this high life narration, came the revelation of the fraud and heartless deception practiced upon the noble Count Guido de Guastalla!

The whole revelation of the successful intrigues of Roletta Armstrong's life, a plot as crafty as the Pompadour's snares for Louis XV, followed.

Step by step, she was described as moving on, with her eyes resolutely fixed upon fortune and a title, and the cold abandonment of her unacknowledged sailor lover,—was painted in scathing words.

The fact that the bride had already been both wife and widow,—that the death of Jasper Coffin, the rightful heir, was by no means certain,—save for the vague rumors of the crews of the plundered whalers,—was coupled with the mystery of his taking off,—as if the ambitious girl had even contrived that murder, at long range!

The particulars of the strange death of Josè and the idiocy of Tom Dunstan, were joined to surmises as to

the obscurely ended lives of Bill Tarbox and his sister Tabitha!

The dead clergyman's complaisance, the strange return of Worth's three thousand dollars, was also unveiled.

The flight of the heiress and her family,—the false accusations of murder against "an innocent man," were coupled with the astounding declaration that the letters of Jasper Coffin and his wife to each other,—had been forwarded to Europe, for the inspection of the Count Guastalla and the American Minister,—whose candor and hospitality had been so greatly abused!

The fatal article closed with the reported news that an instant separation of the newly married couple had taken place in Rome—the shameful disclosure being made simultaneously there, and that all the guests at the magnificent wedding had received, through the Italian post, the full hideous story translated into French, Spanish and Italian.

It was on the day following this astounding publication, while Ben Haggerty sat in Squire Avery's office, at Huntington, waiting the return of Jabez Simpson from the bank, with the price of this last literary villainy when a carriage dashed up and Arthur Manson, leaping from it, rushed into the old lawyer's office.

"Where is this man Walsh, or Worth?" he demanded, his voice trembling with rage.

"Take a seat sir; you are excited!" calmly sneered the old counsellor.

Then adjusting his spectacles, he said slowly, "I do not know where Mr. Worth is, moreover, I do not care!"

"He shall answer to me, for this last piece of villainy!" cried Manson.

The enraged lawyer shook a copy of the "New York Flambeau," in the very face of the old Squire.

"Softly, softly, my dear sir!" gravely said the crafty local attorney, quietly closing his desk.

"Mr. Worth is absent, as all men know, upon a long tour of travel. His name does not seem to appear even once in the article which you are brandishing. He is a

man of considerable property here, now, and, has his own friends, also! I counsel you to be very careful!

"You can hunt Mr. Worth up at your leisure. If I have any interests of his in my hands, I will do my duty to him, and also to the whole community!

"As for the Coffin scandal, if the cap fits your side—*wear it!* I have nothing to say as to your strange client. I suppose that you will now make yourself as utterly ridiculous, as you did, in the 'José Oliviera' murder case. I have the honor to bid you good day!" The old Squire locked his writing desk.

"You will always find me ready to meet you half way, sir, either in peace or war. But, this time, you and your friends seem to be *under fire!*" He walked away in silence.

Far away, in the salons of the Eternal City, a mob of curiosity mongers besieged every one who had been a witness of the now infamously scandalized marriage.

In a splendid apartment, in a hotel in distant Florence,—a wretched woman clad in black, sat sobbing alone, her only companions being the faithful servants who had clung to her, when this storm broke in upon the honeymoon of the newly married lovers!

It was in the villa sacred to Guido Guastalla's mother, the old jewel of Fiesolè, that the infamous documents blasting Roletta de Guastalla's happiness, were received by post, as well as several other exemplars, hastily mailed by those "sympathizing friends," who are always in at the death of every hunted woman or ruined man. One glance at Guido de Guastalla's noble face had told the agonized bride that his pride was humbled to the dust!

"Is any part of the story true, mia carissima?" he sadly said.

"Can I go back to Rome boldly and sheath my sword in the heart of some villain? What will the American Minister say? What can he say? Is there anything that you should have told me, *before?*"

The wife writhed in agony.

For two happy weeks, the coronet of a Countess had rested upon the beautiful woman's brows, and now,

she knew but too well that an idol had been shattered! Shame! Ridicule, blame unmerited, all came to her now, in default of having skilfully played the lucky cards dealt out to her in life,—by the hand of Dame Fortune!

And so, she had stood speechless, helpless before him, when her husband bitterly said, “Your letters as a wife to *another husband*, his letters to you, will be furnished to feed the vulgar curiosity of the sneering world of fashion! I shall go mad, Roletta, if you do not speak!”

Some better angel in the hard hearted beauty’s nature whispered to her.

For, now, a woman who had tasted all the joys of that higher life she had yearned for, a woman educated, accomplished and refined in the small arts of “*la haute volée*,”—she saw that all she craved, might have been fairly reached,—and with no treason to the gallant young nobleman, whose noble life she had clouded.

“Listen, Guido,” she sadly said, “the punishment always falls upon the innocent! I am not altogether guilty, but, I am defenceless! I am not that you think me—not what they say, and yet, in the face of an enemy who would wreck your whole life,—an enemy invisible, devilish, cunning and powerful,—I will not expose you to, perhaps, a violent death!

“Let them follow me, not you!

“I will not return to Rome, and I will not drag you down! I see now, at a glance, the crafty waiting of this artful fiend to attack me, until the blow would break other hearts than mine! They shall not win! They must not gain such a brutal victory. You have long dreamed of India! Of your tour in the Orient! You are young, strong, brave, noble!

“Trust to me now, even if I feared to trust you, all in all! I would have spared you all pain!—I know that our alliance was urged on by interested friends! I can see it now, looking downwards out of the windows of the golden dome of rank and high life! I

have joined your church to please you, Guido," she choked back a sob.

"Let me go away, alone, with my retinue, to the Swiss lakes, or to the Tyrol—to Austria or Hungary! There are convents there, where I can pass a year in penance, in silence, in reflection! I fear no danger!—The human devil who pursues me has triumphed, by the devil's aid! I will submit myself to your judgment, to your sentence, but, only after a year! If there is further scandal,—if I am followed up,—let me defend my past life, alone!

"Father Ricciotti is my confessor! You know him well.—Let him alone know where I go. He can use the invisible machinery of the church to guard me but, only till you shall know all, at the right time.

"As for money, my estate, our interests, let all be decided by your family advocate, and my own American adviser. I will write to Arthur Manson to come at once, to Rome and to meet your adviser and act under your own orders.—I give you a free hand, I submit myself to you not, in judgment, but as waiting until you know all."

Seeing the strong man shaken with convulsive sobs, the repentant woman fell on her knees.

"Let me bear this sorrow *alone*, and yet do not misjudge me! One year may end this hideous pursuit. I will have Father Ricciotti meet my lawyer, and your lawyer. Ricciotti, at the time which he judges the right moment, may tell all to you.

"To you, Guido, but—to no one else!

"And then, if you say so, I will give you back your name, but, undisgraced.—You shall not be wrecked by this fiend. Hold off your hand till Ricciotti bids you strike for me, or else brand me. Only one word in my defence! They can show nothing which brands me as unworthy to be your wife! I came to the altar as free, as clean handed,—as you did. Yet, I deserve my penance!"

"On one condition only, I accept," said Guido Guastalla, in a hollow voice. "No benefit of your fortune comes to me till you tell me, yourself, that I

can touch it with no disgrace. I will telegraph for Father Ricciotti. I will take you openly as my wife to Florence to meet him. He will take you to a convent in the Tyrol, where several of our line have been the Lady Abbesses. He alone shall know my address and my movements! You are to tell him all, at Florence! He is to tell me nothing now—save that I may go on this tour, in honor.

"If you fight an invisible foe, he will bring the whole power of the Church to your aid. Carissima! I trusted you from the first. Had you trusted me, we might not have been, to-day, *wedded strangers!*—I will wait for Ricciotti, and, wait till you say 'Come!' You shall have your year! Let the lawyers meet! Does your advocate know all?"

"Only the dark side of the story!" sobbed the Countess Roletta. "And, this scandal, of course, has been sent broadcast in print, in America! I do not seek vengeance now! Expiation first, then, my pardon from your eye, if worthy, *if not,*"—she suddenly tottered and fell senseless in her husband's arms.

And so it was, that two weeks later, Roletta de Gustalla sat sobbing alone, in Florence, ready to go to the station whence a private railway carriage was to take her to Verona, on her way to Notre Dame de la Garde at Trient, in the lonely wild Tyrol.

The loving woman would not leave the city by the Arno, till the telegraph from Alexandria had told her of the Count Guido's safe arrival, on his long tour of a year among the ruins of the mighty East.

Her despatches to Manson had directed a line of action which astounded the defeated lawyer, when he studied their practical wisdom.

With a sigh, he departed to prepare for that visit to Rome which was to bring down upon him the social vengeance of the relatives who, for too brief a season, had fattened upon the favors of the ambitious heiress.

"A waiting fight, at long range, with an invisible enemy, it's a stern chase, and, I fear, *a hopeless one,*" he mused.

But, while Father Ricciotti, calm and unimpassioned,

conducted the deserted wife to the eyrie of the nuns in the Tyrol, the social clamor died away in Rome, for no one knew whither the husband and wife had separately journeyed. Powerful friends were soon at work.

Some mysterious influence soon quieted all the chatter of the salons, and, even the American Minister doggedly contented himself with a brief remark as to "anonymous villainy," and, then, victoriously, challenged the man behind the vile publication "to come out into the glare of daylight!"

Left alone in her Austrian retreat, Roletta, Countess of Guastalla, saw Father Ricciotti depart without a hope of present help, and yet with no fear of the future.

That the good old priest bore in his bosom the whole story of her strange life, that she had spared herself nothing,—was the one consolation of the woman who was now drinking the bitter dregs of the cup of happiness dashed away from her lips!

Selfish, heartless, and coldly ambitious in her past,—the chastened woman had seen the error of her ways, and now—only clung to one frail spar in her cell of misery.

It was the knowledge that, in case of her death, Guido de Guastalla, the man who had spared her in her hour of public humiliation,—would surely know all, and listen to the Voice of Rome!—As to her own future, she read no sign in the inscrutable eyes of the grave old priest.

The few weeks of her married life with the dark eyed patrician had been a wandering in Paradise, a glimpse of that higher world, to which her aspiring soul would climb, even at any risk!

She knew not of Father Ricciotti's departure by Zurich for Paris, and his three weeks' cautious visit in Liverpool, feeling around until he had stumbled upon the home of the aged mother of Hugh Allerton, who had received from the bank of Liverpool, all the documents and papers of the son whose savings were now her comfortable life provision.

This visit, unknown to the advocates of the estranged husband and wife, as a future menace would

have maddened the triumphant Hiram Worth,—had he known of it.

The victorious traitor had stolen away from his hiding in Turin, where he had met Ben Haggerty's secret correspondent, after launching the pamphlets sent to every one of the wedding guests.

Hastening out of Italy into France,—Worth made his way down by Marseilles to Lisbon, where he awaited the mail with Haggerty's journals from New York and that adroit Bohemian's reports on the sensation produced in Suffolk County, by the last expose of Roletta Armstrong's secret first marriage.

Two regrets, the man fighting now for life,—carried away to Funchal,—when he sailed on the *Don Pedro* to join the delighted Dolores at Funchal, and to steal back to Philadelphia on the fruit steamer.

He had not dared to boldly incorporate the tell tale letters of husband and wife nor to produce them, even through his agents, to satisfy the American Minister's public challenge! He had sent informal copies direct to Count Guastalla, but, his friends had stolen them after Guastalla's departure.

He had been forced to conceal *his own name* as the lover once betrayed and abandoned by the aspiring Roletta Armstrong,—and, in spite of all effort, Haggerty's spy in Rome, could only learn that the Count and Countess of Guastalla were "on a foreign tour." Of the effect of his blow, he knew nothing!

Guido Guastalla, had taken passports under one of his minor titles, and so his incognito was sacred.—To Father Ricciotti, the helpless wife owed the skill with which her own departure from Italy was conducted.

And proud, loyal, impassive,—the attorneys, intendants and palace and villa keepers of the vaunted nobleman, only gave the vacant stare of scorn to the queries of every gossip.

They coldly said, "The Count, he always goes when he pleases, where, he pleases, and as, he pleases!"

And, in the higher circles of the Quirinal, the Vatican and the Cardinalate, the great princes of the Church merely frowned, muttering "What family is

without some hidden scandal! Basta!" The bolt had been shot in vain!

And so, the summer months glided on into winter, the snows of the New Year were drifted upon the bleak Suffolk plains, and no one marvelled when the haggard and desperate face of Hiram Worth was seen again, in his sleigh, dashing around the now united Wardour and Worth estates.

That the beautiful Dolores was now the ruling mistress of Hiram Worth's own home was an accepted fact, and the startled country folk sternly avoided the man, to whose ocean wanderings, the ugliest of rumors clung stubbornly.

Old Jabez Simpson, domiciled in Mehitabel's lonely home, moved "in a mysterious way, his wonders to perform." His business with the now prosperous Bob Hilliard, his out door activity for his wealthy nephew, —explained much, which might have brought down a visit of the revenue officers. For, the illicit cigar dealing went on in an unbroken line of successful voyages.

The fact of the impending arrival of Captain Jonas Starbuck from the Arctic, was coupled with Hiram Worth's long conference with Squire Avery. The general discontent of the plundered sailors of the whaling fleet was voiced in a clamor to have all the facts of the career of Hiram Worth made known.

"Murder, desertion, treason!" These were ugly words, and yet bandied freely! That the unexpected was looked for, was evidenced by the rumors that Abigail Armstrong and her sister were expected to reopen the Coffin mansion, in view of the possible return of the Countess Guastalla.

Since the infamy of the "New York Flambeau," Arthur Manson, returned from his European tour, ruled the County with a rod of iron!

It was King Stork, now, and men sighed, even for the days of old Zenas Coffin!

That some as yet unexplained duel to the death was on, between warring elements in the "Whaling Company," was known to all, and yet, each partisan showed

a face as stony as the sphinx. The Long Islanders are coldly covetous men.

Men knew that Jonas Starbuck was ordered to lay off for one season and, that there would be a general legal reorganization.

The Easter days were ushered in with a blizzard which was the last defiant storm of an expiring winter.

Sleet and snow, rain and darkness and piled up drifts marked the gloomiest Easter Eve ever known in Suffolk.

Few travellers were abroad to see the sleigh which, three days before, had been swiftly driven down the lonely avenues to the Coffin mansion.

And, none of the village gossips saw the astonished Arthur Manson, muffled up to the ears, depart for New York on the train, to summon, by telegraph, the two women who had never dared to openly face the sneers of Huntington, since the marriage of the Countess Guastalla.

But, Ben Haggerty, ever the companion of Bob Hilliard's pleasures, now the only confidant of the desperate Hiram Worth, had been warned of Manson's meeting the French steamer.

A cipher telegram from New York to Hiram Worth reached that dark-minded plotter just as the unhappy heiress of Zenas Coffin was safely hidden in her queenly rooms in the long unfamiliar mansion.

To dash out in his cutter and follow Manson's hurried return to the train was Hiram Worth's desperate expedient.

He well knew that but two women relatives of Manson were in the Coffin house, the masculine members of his family having all "set up" their own homes in Huntington. They were all prosperous now.

Suddenly, the significance of Jonas Starbuck's coming return, and the open quarrel in the whaling company struck him. "She has returned *alone*, and is in hiding. The blow is about to fall! They may have discovered further direct evidence.—Starbuck will join the heaviest battalions! I know him!

"His evidence, perhaps that of the men on the

Favorite, looked up, bribed, moreover, may at least send me to States prison for life, as a traitor and deserter! The murder counts for nothing now.

"She has quieted her Italian husband, of course, with money.—Money often salves the wounds of honor! Here,—alone and waiting to meet Starbuck! She will throw her gold into the scales! His evidence alone would send me to States prison for stealing the letters!"

On his way back to his old colonial home where Dolores awaited him, he drank heavily from a bottle hidden in the sleigh.

Then, locked in his room, he mused morosely, till Dolores had summoned him often to his dinner.

Silent and gloomy, he returned to his room, watching the fierce "Pribiloff's" eyes trying to read his very soul!

The fiery brandy was now coursing through his veins, a devil's counsellor.

"She is there, alone,—to-night! Manson cannot return till morning! There is *only one way* to stop the tongue of this she-devil!"

He saw a hangman's noose dangling before him! Yet he quailed not!

His eyes fell upon a pair of snow shoes fastened upon the wall, an arctic trophy! A devilish plan came to him!

Stealing downstairs, he seized a brandy bottle and, after a few furtive preparations, quickly returned to the main room, where Dolores sat, wistful in her dark beauty, oddly fingering her guitar.

"I have a work to do! I must be alone," he said. "Good night!" He strode to the door.

And, then, suddenly turning back, he passionately kissed the timid woman, who tried in vain to read his dark thoughts.

As the door closed, his foot sounding heavily on the stair, the poor waif of Fortune burst into tears! Some grim fear possessed her!

The white expanse of snow without seemed to the child of the tropics to be the icy realm of Death. The

wild winds sang only of dark deeds done in the past, as the pallid woman stole away—alone.

Half an hour later, Hiram Worth glided out of a side door.

Slipping his feet into the snow shoes,—he growled “A mile and a half! I can make it in ten minutes.”

He felt for his knife and his two pistols. There was nothing lacking! He had no plan of action formed, yet, for, the Devil urged him on.

Then breasting the storm, he dashed silently away, with murder in his heart.

His fear had been a true prophet! That Roletta, Countess of Guastalla, had landed, secretly, was an omen of danger to the as yet unpunished traitor.

And, still, the merciless villain reckoned, without his host.

But, familiar with the Coffin mansion in boyhood,—Hiram Worth glided on, never noting “Pribiloff” trailing along behind him, like a spirit of the night. The fierce dog delighted in the return of his Siberian snows!

CHAPTER XXIV.

FOR MARGHERITA’S SAKE.

There was a faint glimmer in three windows of the Coffin mansion, as the last traitor of Long Island glided furtively into a clump of trees, under the very window where the Countess Guastalla slept, all seemingly unguarded.

A projecting clump of columns, the matted vines, and the heavy buttress ornaments, gave him, as an expert sailor climber, an easy access to the second story.

All was silent! The offices and servants’ lodges were some distance away.

The mansion was in its other rooms all dark! All was apparently deserted.

The sighing wind aided his operations, as the ath-

letic sailor, with a knife in his teeth,—clambered lightly to the window ledges of the second story.

His two pistols were thrust in his breast and he had drank in new courage from his bottle.

One frail door only, now, shut off that dimly lighted apartment! The devil's courage of the very last draught of brandy aided him, as he gently raised the unfastened second story window,—adjoining the double sleeping apartment.

His moccasined foot was already inside the darkened dressing room, when the heavy discharge of both barrels of a shot gun aroused all the sleepers in the interior!

Something crashed heavily down, falling backwards into a piled up snow drift! Then, the baying of a hound woke the night echoes!

A woman's scream, long, piercing and shrill, was heard, as hurrying feet sounded out within, but, over the dead burglar, two men, bundled in furs, were bending as "Pribiloff," with a fierce growl, dashed upon them, vainly tearing and rending at the heavy winter garb of the two hidden watchmen.

When windows were raised, and womanly cries for help were heard within, the two men dashed into the house, leaving the fierce Siberian guardian standing defiantly over the body of his dead master.

"*Dead! Come away!*" cried the man who had fired the gun.

Ten minutes later, a sleigh was driven rapidly away and then, the heavily armed watchman, seeing his companion safely off, on his wild night ride for Doctor Ayres, but a half mile away,—slowly approached the snow drift where the gallant brute, still, guarded the body of the unknown dead man.

"There is no other way," the agitated watchman cried, after warning the frightened women inside. "I must find out who this burglar was!"

A shot rang out, and "Pribiloff's" blood soon mingled, in the snow, with the frozen life stream of his guilty master.

"Poor dog!" muttered the frightened man, "*His only friend!*"

And then, holding the lantern down to the dead face,—he started back, shrieking "My God! Hiram Worth! This was to be *murder*,—not robbery!"

With a ghastly face, he crept back into the house to find a frightened woman, at the door of the Countess Roletta's room.

"Tell her nothing!" he faltered.

"It was Hiram Worth who came to murder her!"

The woman burst into tears.

"She is dying! Oh, for help, poor woman!"

In a few minutes, the sleigh returned,—the horses being driven like mad wolves. The Doctor leaped from the sleigh.

All that night, the lights burned in every room of the Coffin mansion, and the corpse of the slain traitor lay on the floor of the carriage house, with the body of the faithful hound at his side. His face was set in a frozen defiance to Fate!

The telegraph operator at the station, roused in the night watches, rubbed his eyes as he sent the fateful message to New York City summoning Arthur Manson to the protection of a woman now hovering at the edge of the grave.

For, Roletta Guastalla was now fighting a woman's fight with death.

A week, later, the whole of Suffolk County knew the long-hidden truth!

Jabez Simpson, stony faced and silent, with Bob Hilliard and the black-eyed Dolores,—mutely received the body of the would-be assassin and buried it, with no pretence of even a prayer, far away from the sight of men, in the little family plot where his blameless mother now slept the long sleep which knows no waking!

And, wonder upon wonder soon startled the aroused community!—For, while Arthur Manson made no sign, there was a gallant foreigner of distinguished appearance, who, accompanied by a grave-faced priest, entered the Coffin mansion, a week later,—where Roletta,

the Countess Guastalla, lay under the care of her mother and the worldly minded widow who had been Zenas Coffin's best adviser.

That the noble Count Guido Guastalla had followed his wife over to America was a matter of no public interest, but, that Father Ricciotti, Captain Jonas Starbuck and Squire Avery were closeted long with Counsellor Arthur Manson, at the office of the old Huntington lawyer, was a source of the wildest rumors of later discoveries, in the mystery of the Arctic!

Squire Avery boldly confided to the whole community that Hiram Worth had secretly married the Portuguese "Dolores Castañeda," and, that his will gave to that passive woman, Dolores, all the wealth of which he died possessed.

It was the stern-faced old Jacob Simpson who conducted the affrighted departing woman to New York City, where the Portuguese Consul arranged for her return to Funchal, to be long-known as the richest woman of the native colony.

In black, with bitter tears in her Murillo eyes, Dolores knelt alone by that grave where only a nameless stone, to-day, marks the resting place of the Last Traitor of Long Island!

But, "Pribiloff," lying at his wretched master's feet,—keeps, in death, the unflinching watch of the Siberian bloodhound.

The month after the slaying of Hiram Worth, rolled rapidly away.

It was the formal inquest which developed all the facts which led the desperate sailor to seek to murder the woman whom he thought to have been left defenceless, for a night.

Arthur Manson gravely gave his evidence to prove his fears of a secret attempt upon the life of the Countess Guastalla.

"My client returned to New York City, unexpectedly, and she insisted upon going back, secretly, to the Huntington mansion, hoping to meet Captain Jonas Starbuck there on his arrival, before Hiram Worth

could delude his old friend, with his specious lies. I felt the dangers hovering around her!

"Finding her immovable, I armed two trusty watchmen, secretly hired, with orders to post themselves in the carriage house, and to make alternate rounds during the night,—every quarter of an hour for her protection.

"I was convinced that this reckless scoundrel, Worth, was the anonymous director of the vile attacks upon my client, both in Italy and in New York, and that he had spies watching both her, and myself. Knowing the excitable condition of the Countess, I directed these watchmen to conceal themselves, from her sight. You all know the result!

"That my return to New York was watched over by Hiram Worth's spies is proved that he attacked the house, at once, supposing that only the three women servants were in the great mansion.

"The coachman and farmer with the gardener were in the offices, some hundreds of yards away. And, of all these matters he well knew,—familiar with the household habits.

"It was evidently the half crazed man's idea to hide his past record of treason,—of giving over the whole American whaling fleet to the flames,—by silencing the Countess Guastalla! The proofs are complete, now, as to his cowardly murder of the defenceless Jasper Coffin!

"I had only before feared on his part a design to frighten my client away, by a merely pretended burglarious attack, so that he could reach Jonas Starbuck, first, through his own friends and advisers. But, I know all, now.

"It was Hiram Worth's aim to try and overthrow our control of the whaling company. And he wished to do this, to prevent the facts of Coffin's murder ever reaching the public!"

The evidence of Captain Jonas Starbuck, however, lashed the listeners to fury.

"I found on this trip in the Gulf of Anadyr, the tribe of natives who were trading on the *Favorite*, when the

Shenandoah fired her shells and sent the armed boats racing off to the doomed schooner.

"Jasper instantly took the alarm! Captain Jasper Coffin of the *Favorite*, had a trust fund of eighteen thousand dollars, in Mexican coin, in the schooner's cabin, with which to buy furs, later, at Petropaulauski.

"He barricaded all the cabin doors and was quickly passing the money bags out of the cabin windows, into the canoes, where the native chief and his men were receiving them!

"Chief Ilyak of the Gillaks, who knew Hiram Worth well, from our other trading voyages, of ten years, was crouched on the schooner's stern mouldings, passing down the money bags into the boats. They had saved nearly all the money, when he saw the door burst in.

"He told me that Worth brutally fired his revolver, three times, into the body of the unarmed man, and that the murder was coldly cruel and unprovoked!

"At Nagasaki, on the way home, I met the British steamer *Laurel*, and, the boatswain told me that he took Hiram Worth off, of his own free will to the *Laurel*, at Funchal,—the traitor having been brought out by José Oliviera, after the pretended murder.

"And so, this dead scoundrel betrayed his American shipmates,—his own home fleet, and all the New Bedford whalers, to the torch of the Southern corsair, merely, to have the chance of safely murdering Jasper Coffin, under the color of a fracas!

"Two of the *Shenandoah's* men, later, found shelter in the Arctic whaling fleet and they told me that under the name of 'Jack Mason,' this traitor wretch piloted the *Shenandoah*, himself, in the South Pacific, to every haunt of the Americans and at night, in the chart room,—after getting North, he gave Captain Waddell, all the directions obtained from Kussaroff,—the true friend of the Cold Spring Company!

"He was the last Long Island Traitor, untrue to his messmates, his ship, his home and, his flag! His ashes should be scattered to the winds! His bones, gnawed by dogs!"

The voluntary statement of Father Ricciotti closed the history of a wrecked life.

"It became my clerical duty," he calmly said, "to visit Liverpool, and, to trace out the mother of 'Gunner Hugh Allerton' of the British Naval Reserve.

"Here is the sworn deposition of the dead officer, left in the keeping of the Bank of Liverpool, before his last fatal voyage to Bombay.

"It is not evidence, but, it is the evidence which the disgusted Briton *would have given*, had he ever lived to reach the United States! He hoped to be examined upon the trial of this American renegade and deserter, after Worth's arrest here, for the wanton murder of Jasper Coffin."

The sickening story of the slaying of the defenceless man was read, backed by the seals of the British notary.

The instant discharge of the two watchmen and another "complete exoneration" followed.

A revulsion of feeling in favor of the hitherto unpopular Countess Guastalla, speedily followed.

But, while Captain Starbuck, Squire Avery, Counsellor Manson and Jabez Simpson directed the councils of the Whaling Company, no further reference was made to the dead man whose memory was the shame of the whole Suffolk country side!

The sale of the adjoining farms of Jabez Simpson and the valuable property of the dead man (in the interest of his Portuguese widow) to a partnership headed by Avery and Starbuck, was the sequel to Simpson's disposing of all his whaling shares, with the brief comment that he was "going west!"

"The Portuguese Consul will receive Dolores' money and send it on to Funchal," he said.

"As for me," the old man said, "I'll crawl away and lay my bones to rest, among strangers!"

It was Ben Haggerty and Bob Hilliard who took on the burden of the profitable Havana smuggling which was soon artfully transferred to the Jersey shores, though Hilliard, still, held grimly on to the old home, the price of his unsuspected murder of the poor Funchal spy. And so, the wages of sin were dealt

out! Guilty and innocent shared unequally, in rewards and punishments.

In the drawing room of the house where his sick wife lay, the Count Guido de Guastalla received two strange visitors while awaiting Doctor Ayres' first permission to view the face of the woman who had hovered so long between life and death.

There was no deceit in the gravity of the faces of Starbuck and the broken old Jabez Simpson.

Starbuck,—a good Portuguese interpreter, —told the astonished noble, of the old man's wish to make some return of documents concerning him.

"Here are some papers which were once stolen from your wife!" solemnly said the despondent old beach comber now going out into the exile of sadness and shame. "I shall never see her face. No one must open them, *but, herself!* It is one sin more to be charged up against the man who now lies under the unmarked stone! But, my duty to return them, to her!"

"I am content," said Jabez, for he saw the promise in the grave Italian's eyes, as Count Guido received the sealed packets, in a courteous silence, with a grave bow.

"There is nothing left now, Jonas," said the old man, "but, to take a last look at the old burying ground,—to say farewell forever, there, to Mary Worth and Mehitabel, and then, to find my own hiding place among strangers!"

In the traditions of Long Island, no man ever knew where the battered old human hulk drifted away to rest upon the shores of Time! The dregs of Life's cup were bitter indeed!

But, Guido de Guastalla, led by Father Ricciotti,—at last entered the room where the beautiful Countess Roletta lay, pale and wasted, with her great mournful eyes fixed upon the man who was come to pronounce her doom.

"He knows all, *now*, my daughter," said the old priest, as the mournful-eyed noble dropped at the side of the bed and kissed a thin and wasted hand.

His tears were streaming down, as a feeble cry,—an infant's wail—reached his ears from an adjoining room.

"Let, this, atone, Guido" whispered the repentant woman. "*It is the voice of your own child!* Love her, even if you banish me!"

While the husband gazed upon the tiny face of the little daughter of the Guastallas,—Father Ricciotti handed to the Countess Roletta the sealed packet, without a word.

"The letters!" he whispered, as he broke the seal at the invalid's nod. The feeble woman glanced at them.

She gazed upon the three tell-tale epistles of her own,—and the two, which bore Jasper Coffin's handwriting.

As her husband bent over her, she said slowly, "Guido!—my fate is in these letters. They are yours to dispose of!"

"*To dispose of?*" cried the young noble, with flashing eyes.

A crimson flush dyed the woman's cheeks as she nodded her head, her eyes watching his trembling fingers.

The eyes of Father Ricciotti followed him, as he sprang across the room and, silently, tossed the fatal packet into the fire!

Then, turning to his wife, he folded the wasted form in his strong arms, without a word! Husband and wife were left alone.

A few moments later, Father Ricciotti stole into the room, and, led the shaken man away.—His face was radiant!

"Fear nothing, my son," he said, as he raised his hand in a parting benediction.

"Joy does not kill! You have shown the faith of a gentleman! And, there will be blessings untold showered upon you."

He glided away, and left the two there in the blessed silence of a new born happiness.

Other bright eyes shine to-day in the old Coffin mansion!—The children of strangers play in the leafy gardens of the home of the forgotten banker.

Squire Avery and Counsellor Manson never dis-

closed the final transactions which closed out all the vast estate of the Countess Guastalla, into funds ultimately transferred into the hands of the Rothschilds.

But, in far away Detroit, two aged women lived long in comfortable retirement together,—knowing that the passionate beauty of Huntington would never again set foot on her native shores!

The legend of the "Last Traitor of Long Island" slowly faded away from the minds of the revengeful villagers who at last forgot the stormy-souled sailor who had been both the glory and the shame of his native village.

The crumbling nameless stone, alone, marks the spot where he rests, "the world forgetting, by the world forgot."

It was in the year, eighteen eighty-six, when the presentation of the entrancing young Countess Margherita de Guastalla to their Italian Majesties, at the Quirinal Palace, recalled to the elder fashionables of Rome, some strange stories which had once clouded the marriage of Count Guido de Guastalla, now an Ambassador of United Italy.

The swords of Garibaldi, and Victor Emmanuele, the pens of Mazzini and Cavour, had thrown down the Papal States, Bomba and the Austrian had vanished, and the son of the bluff Vittorio Emmanuele ruled an United Italy, in the olden palace of the Cæsars.

The venerable Pius IX. had doffed the triple tiara forever, and the saintly successor of the Fisherman, ruled but a few square miles of the Leonine city.

But, Bishop Ricciotti—now a silver haired prelate,—had laid his hands in blessing upon the head of the lovely young patrician. The young Countess was a star of beauty!

"The innocent mediator!" he murmured, gazing at the noble form of the stately father and the chastened beauty of the mother who had been hailed for years as the "Angel of Fiesolè."

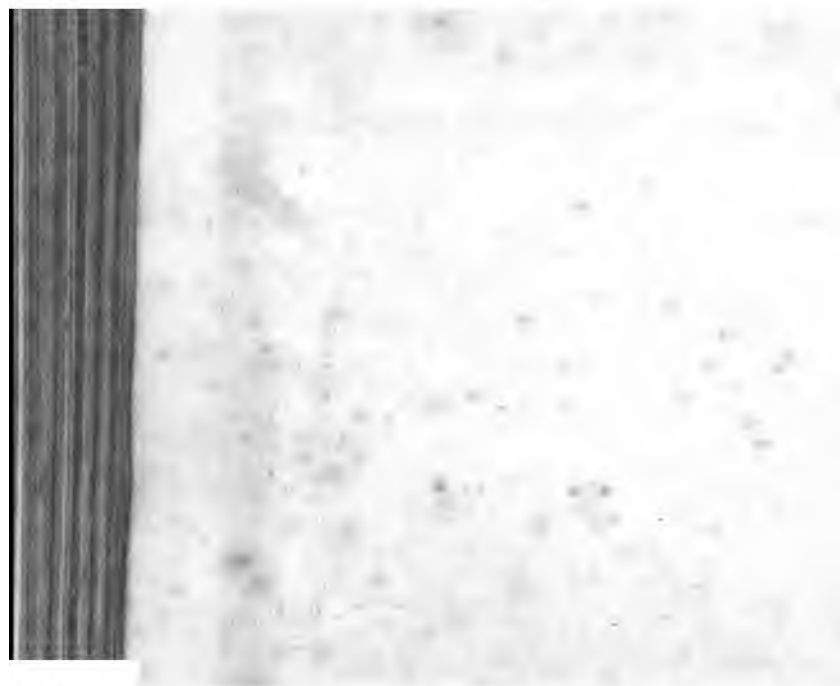
"A little child shall lead them!" the aged Bishop murmured. He joyed, often, to see little Count Guido, guiding his pony on the Pincian—a bright boy of ten.

He knew of the birth of a new soul in the mother, in that long sojourn in the mountain walled convent of Trient, but, he knew not of the new life which sprang up in the Countess Roletta's heart when Guido de Guastalla led her back to the villa at Fiesolè, sacred to the memory of his mother.

"Here, where we parted, carissima," the gallant Italian cried, "Let us, here, begin our new life! For, there is no shadow between us, now! No! Tell me nothing! I only know that I may take you again to my heart! Let us, both, lead the noble life,—for, little Margherita's sake!"

THE END.

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